– LATIN AMERICA@WAR 33 –

REVOLUCIÓN LIBERTADORA

VOLUME 2: THE 1955 COUP THAT OVERTHREW PRESIDENT PERÓN

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INTRODUCTION

In the first volume, the background of the Liberating Revolution has been covered, including a biography of Perón, going through the air attacks of June 1955 and culminating with the description of the Armed Forces of Argentina that were prepared for the final blow, which occurred in September of that year.

This volume covers the intense preparations for the coup of September 1955 and then the conflict itself, described day by day in detail. Once the triumph of the so-called Liberating Revolution was consummated, the long exile of former President Perón is described, first in Paraguay and then in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and finally Spain. The story ends with his return to Argentina and his third and last presidency, with his death in the exercise of his functions.

Antonio Luis Sapienza
Asunción, June 2022

1

THE INTENSE PREPARATIONS IN THE PREVIOUS WEEKS

In Córdoba, from mid-July to August, there were several bomb attacks or fires against six basic Peronist units, the headquarters of the UES (Union of High School Students), the General University Confederation, and a bust of Eva Perón in Unquillo. Two groups of radicals acted in that province, one led by Yadarola and Rodolfo Amuchástegui, another led by Eduardo Galmond and Santiago del Castillo. At the same time, conservative Catholic groups constituted their own combat groups that would later take centre stage in episodes of urban warfare in the provincial Capital. Its main cadres were the politicians Luis Torres Fotheringham, Tristán Castellano, Guillermo Saravia, Damián Fernández Astrada, Lisardo Novillo Saravia, and the engineers Fernández Padilla, Guillermo Castellano and Calixto de la Torre. Each command brought together 10 leaders, and each of them led 10 militants.

Parallel to the military preparations, the so-called 'civilian opposition commandos' were also organising themselves independently, especially to act in auxiliary support and liaison actions. One of the objectives was to silence the radio stations in the Capital, not by occupying them but by sabotaging the antennas, so that they could not transmit.

At dawn on 14 August, the Federal Police arrested a group of university students on charges of planning the murder of Perón and his ministers. The so-called 'Coppa Group' was made up of Ricardo Coppa Oliver, Aníbal Ruiz Moreno, Carlos de Corral, Enzo Ramírez, and others. The next day, the so-called 'Centurion Group', Jorge Masi Elizalde, Franklin Dellepiane Rawson, Manuel Rawson Paz, Mario Espina Rawson, Luis Domingo Aguirre, Julio Aguirre Naón and Carlos Gregorini were arrested.

The newspaper *La Época*, on Monday, 15 August announced: 'The oligarchy wanted to drag the country into disorder and crime in order to take power. It has the hangover of the opposition parties, minors, *pituco* students (middle and high-class students), softened military retirees and some clergymen. It will be returned blow by blow.'

In Buenos Aires, on 29 August, the newspaper *La Época* said, 'An organisation of subversive *pitucos* was discovered in the Barrio Norte (one of the exclusive neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires where the upper classes lived, and that Peronist mobs called *Los negros* – The Black Ones, because of their darker skin – threatened to set fire to the houses and cars of the inhabitants on several occasions under instructions given by President Perón). They had plenty of money, guns, and cars. They planned attacks. They operated in cells, like the Communists. This time the detainees were Emilio de Vedia y Miter, Mario Wernicke, Emilio Allende Posse, Carlos Ocantos, Héctor López Cabanillas and Julio E. Morón.'

On the 30th, Perón raised the possibility of resigning again. Although on 16 June he had already commented on it to his ministers, this time he made a public announcement in a note to the Peronist Party. He mentioned the possibility of 'retiring' in the face of the failure of the conciliatory policy. In a meeting with his ministers and close collaborators, they did not accept the decision and all, without exception, put their resignations at the disposal of the President. They convinced the President that if he resigned, there would be great chaos in the country. Perón took the opportunity to change some ministers who were severely questioned not only by the opposition, but also by the military in general, such as the Minister of the Interior Ángel Borlenghi and that of Education Armando Méndez San Martín.

On the afternoon of 31 August, the CGT organised a large public rally in front of the Government House. Later, at nightfall, Perón addressed those who were there. This speech had a fundamental importance in the development of subsequent events, and promoted in Argentina, in the decades following, new ideas about the use of political violence, 'We must respond to violence with greater violence ... The slogan for every Peronist, whether isolated or within an organisation, is to respond to a violent action with a more violent one. And when one of ours falls, five of theirs will fall …'

These words caused great repulsion among those who did not believe in the Peronist ideology. That same night, in Río Cuarto, General Videla Balaguer announced to his immediate collaborators his intention to rebel. On 1 September, in the command post of the 4th Military Region in Rio Cuarto, Colonel Picca, Lieutenant-Colonel Picasso, Major Fernández Funes and other officers met with General Videla Balaguer to join the rebellion in that area of the country. Major Mauvencin, a participant in that meeting, then called the Army Ministry to report what happened and take the pertinent measures.

Many senior officials, who were plotting against the Perón government, when confronted by the military authorities, emphatically denied any participation in acts of rebellion and the vast majority remained in their positions, which would cost the government dearly only a few weeks later.

On 1 September, there was a moment of confusion. Neither the civil groups of the city of Córdoba, nor the military that participated in the conspiracy at the Artillery School, wanted to leave without the direction of a high-ranking officer, and without the support of their contacts in Buenos Aires. It was not clear if the leader of the revolution was Videla Balaguer, Ossorio Arana, Señorans, or Aramburu. When in doubt whether to 'go out' or 'not go out', Ramón Molina demanded the presence of Ossorio, 'with him there is no problem, even the stoves will go out.' This was because Ossorio had been Director of the Artillery School and enjoyed great popularity among the officers.

On 2 September, Ossorio Arana travelled at dawn, and early in the morning knocked on the door of Videla Balaguer, in Río Cuarto. They resolved that Ossorio travel first to Córdoba and then call after assessing the local situation. Hours later, Mauvecín recounted the events in a meeting with Minister General Lucero, Undersecretary General Embrioni, and the head of the Army Information Service, General Sánchez Toranzo. A rebel officer within the Army Information Service sent the alarm to Videla, who, faced with the imminent arrest, decided to flee from Río Cuarto with his collaborators, with the help of a group of civilians who collaborated in that city.

On 3 September, the National Security Directorate issued a statement detailing actions that should be punished for 'disturbing order and attacking the State.' In his article number 3, he mentioned the printing, distribution and possession of pamphlets of any kind. Article number 4 prohibited meetings on public roads, and meetings in places that did not have cultural, commercial, sporting or recreational objects: any party or party activity of non-Peronist parties was once again considered an act of crime.

The conspiracy of Señorans and Aramburu had the support of a large part of the Navy, but they had no contacts in the Air Force, and in the Army only a small group of units were willing to rise up in Córdoba; although there were great possibilities of rebellion in the Second Army in Cuyo and in other units in Corrientes. Against this background, a meeting was held at the home of Dr Eduardo Héctor Bergalli, in which General Juan José Uranga, Colonel Eduardo Señorans, Captain Arturo H. Rial, Lieutenant Commander Aldo Molinari, Lieutenant Carlos Pujol, and the President of the Radical Civic Union, Arturo Frondizi participated. Señorans announced Aramburu's intention to postpone the attempts until 1956, as he saw no progress in the short term. During the summer, it would be impossible to act because of the discharge of conscript soldiers and the locked storage of much of the war material. Frondizi said in this regard, '…Gentlemen, I am not going to fill the jails with radicals going out with the Navy alone; I need a General...' Uranga promised that there would be a General, but the meeting broke up without resolution.

Fortunately for the revolutionaries, that day the ban on the flights of Naval Aviation aircraft had been lifted, and most of them returned to flight status, although without their guns or bombs, which were in a warehouse. The Naval Aviation at Comandante Espora Base was immediately reorganised, made up of Squad No.1 (Naval Aviation School), under the command of Lieutenant Commander Carlos Beaubeau de Secondigné and Squad No.2 (*Catalina* and *Grumman* aircraft) in charge of Ship Lieutenant Juan María Vassallo. The transport aviation would be in charge of Captain Radl, the Observation Squadron in charge of Captain Estivariz, the patrol aircraft in charge of Captain Méndez Achával. The defence of the base was the responsibility of Ship Lieutenant Calvo Paz with the Marine Corps and Captain Mackinlay would take care

GENERAL PEDRO ARAMBURU
Chief of the Conspiration
Commander of the Armoured Division in Curuzú Cuatiá

COLONEL EDUARDO SEÑORANS
Revolutionary Chief of Staff

MAJOR JUAN FRANCISCO GUEVARA
Revolutionary Chief of Operations

NAVY CAPTAIN ARTURO H. RIAL
Commander of the Southern Revolutionary Area

NAVY CAPTAIN JORGE E. PERRÉN
Second Commander of the Naval Base

GENERAL JULIO A. LAGOS
Commander of the Cuyo Region

GENERAL EDUARDO LONARDI
Chief of the Revolution

MAYOR JUAN JOSÉ MONTIEL F.
Chief of the Uprising of the Armoured Group in Curuzú Cuatiá

COLONEL EDUARDO ARIAS DUVAL
Chief of Rebel Operations in Curuzú Cuatiá

CAPTAIN RAMÓN E. MOLINA
Chief of the Uprising of the Córdoba Artillery School

COLONEL ARTURO OSSORIO ARANA
Revolutionary Second Commander

GENERAL EUGENIO J. ARANDÍA
Commander of the Cuyo Region

The revolutionary leaders of the September coup. (Public Domain) of the prisoners. The entire base would be under the command of Captain Jorge Perren, who was, in fact, the Second in Command of Puerto Belgrano.

On 4 September, the coup plotters in Buenos Aires learned that Aramburu was abandoning the conspiracy and he subsequently refused to act for the remainder of 1955. Later the news would spread to the rest of the conspiracy: Ossorio Arana, Arias Duval, and Guevara remained at their tasks. However, the presence of a General was still an indispensable requirement; therefore, the next day Colonel Cornejo Saravia convinced General Lonardi to take charge of leading the revolution. It took seven days for the news to reach Puerto Belgrano that Aramburu was postponing operations until the following year.

On 7 September, the CGT announced, 'the workers of the Homeland offer themselves as a reserve' of the Army to defend the Constitution. One of the army's intelligence chiefs intimidated Lucero, presenting him with a very successful organisation chart of the conspiratorial structure. Minister Lucero, before ordering the arrest of Aramburu and Señorans, planned a trip to Córdoba for the 12th, to learn about the situation there. If the suspicions were confirmed, on the 16th he would proceed to order the arrests. At dawn on the same day, the 16th, the uprising took place.

The UCR had called a meeting in the Radical House on 16 September, when they would distribute weapons to committees and to parishes. The ultra-Catholic civil commandos (called 'doves') also called for armed action. Previously, they had negotiated a loan with the Rural Society to finance destabilising activities, such as sabotage of the electricity grid, the cables of the telephone company Entel, and shots to the wheels of fire trucks and ambulances. Days before representatives of the UCR met with Emilio Eduardo Massera, Horacio Mayorga, Oscar Antonio Montes, and Osvaldo Cacciatore.

Various civilian 'commando' groups began to emerge around Brother Septimio Walsh, Director of the *Nuestra Señora del Huerto* School. In one of them, Adolfo Sánchez Zinny, Edgardo García Puló, Florencio Arnaudo, Carlos Burundarena, Manuel Gómez Carrillo and other nationalist Catholics gathered. Another group was made up of radical militants, including Roberto Etchepareborda and Héctor Eduardo Bergalli.

On Saturday 10 September, two of Lonardi's sons set out to gather information: Luis Ernesto to Córdoba and Eduardo to Mendoza. At midnight, Luis Ernesto Lonardi informed his father that on 16 September the activities of the Córdoba Artillery School would end, and that its weapons would be stored in guarded places. Therefore, General Lonardi decided to act immediately, with the troops that were in Córdoba, since he believed that, if a subversive focus survived more than 48 hours, it would inevitably lead to the triumph of the movement.

On Sunday 11, Lonardi tried to communicate with Major Juan Francisco Guevara because the latter was aware of all the preparations that Aramburu and Señorans had already made. Lonardi could not leave his home so as not to arouse more suspicion among the army intelligence services, so he sent his son Luis and a friend of his, Ezequiel Pereyra Zorraquín, as representatives.

During the afternoon, Pereyra found the whereabouts of Guevara, who had changed his address to protect himself. That night Lonardi met with Guevara and Lieutenant-Colonel Sánchez Lahoz, and laid out the plan; a simultaneous uprising in all the army garrisons where the revolution was brewing, together with the Puerto Belgrano and Río Santiago bases, and the air units spontaneously going to join in the revolution. Later, the forces of the interior and those of the Litoral would converge on Rosario, in the absence of bridges and tunnels, the Litoral forces would cross with the help of the Río de la Marina Squadron. Just then a 'Liberating Army' would advance towards Buenos Aires, at the same time that the Navy Sea Fleet would advance on the city. Sánchez Lahoz would raise the garrison of the city of Corrientes, Arias Duval would take charge of the Mesopotamian zone, General Uranga would try to raise the Greater Buenos Aires.

Early in the morning of Monday 12th, Guevara announced to Señorans that Lonardi had assumed command of the coup. The same day, Lonardi met with the Lieutenant Commander Jorge J. Palma, who on behalf of the revolutionary navy promised to rise on the 16th at 00:00.

It was also decided that some naval officers would be present in the units that were going to rebel, as a sign of brotherhood between the armed forces and to act as a nexus between them: Lieutenant Commanders Carlos García Favre and Aldo Molinari would be respectively in Córdoba and Curuzú Cuatiá. If the operation to liberate Bengoa was successful, Jorge Palma and Sánchez Sañudo himself would accompany him on his trip to Paraná: between the three of them they would take control of the troops from the city.

That night, Lonardi also met with General Uranga and gave him the mission of raising the Military School and the 1st Patricios Infantry Regiment. At the same time, in Bella Vista, in the house of Captain Jorge Rafael Videla, Guevara met with Captains Genta, Formigoni, Padrós and with Major Dámaso Pérez; they were supposed to rebel at the Military School but had changed their position in view of the prospect of making them lead the cadets against the mounted division that would surely remain loyal to the government.

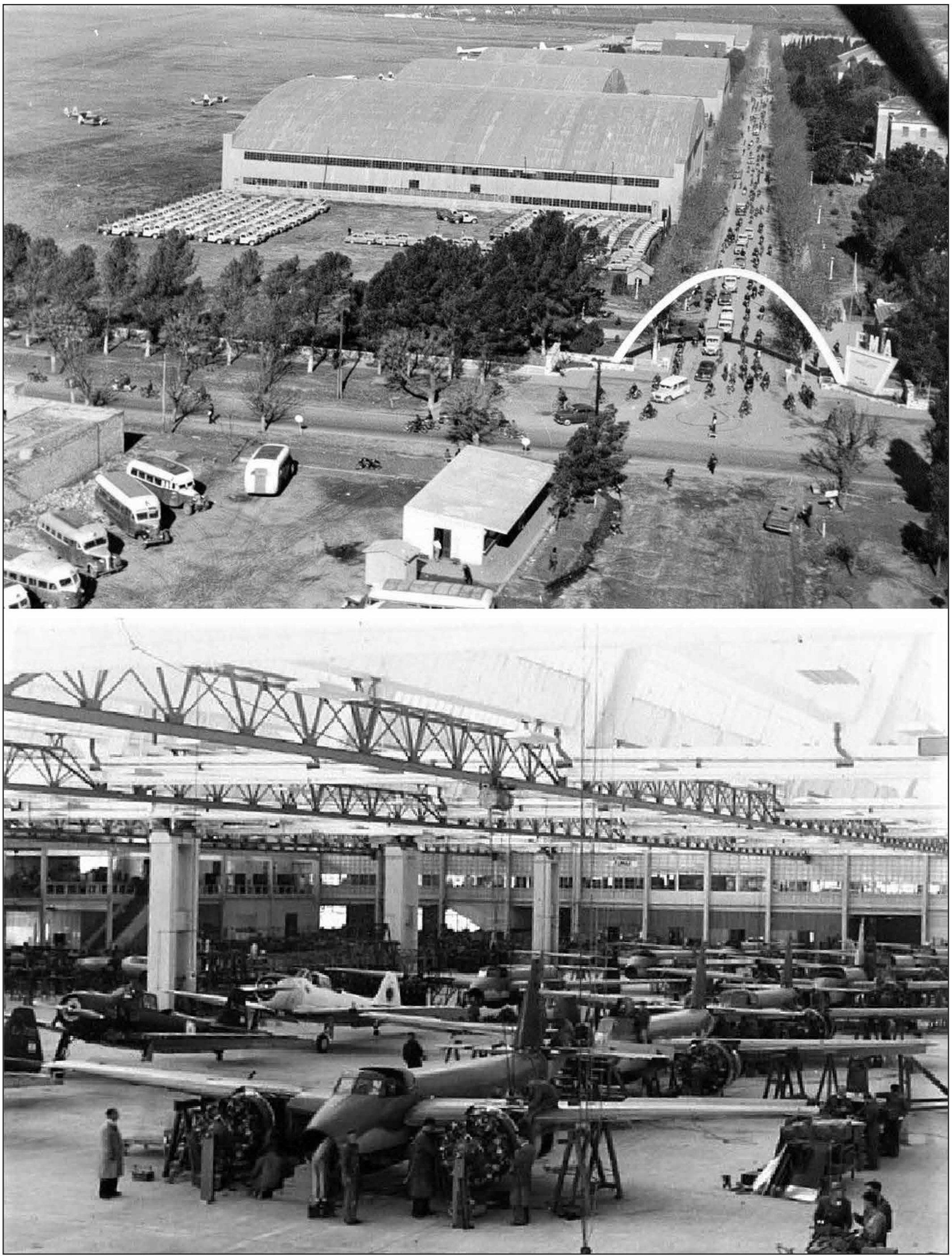
In addition, on the 12th, General Franklin Lucero made a scheduled trip to the Province of Córdoba with the excuse of attending some artillery firing demonstrations – to which the military attachés of the foreign embassies had been invited. There he was convinced of the loyalty of the troops, so he sent a radiogram to President Perón affirming that the situation was under control, and he had a profusely illustrated brochure printed under the title, *A Model Unit: The Artillery School*.

In front of the Artillery School were the Military Aviation School and the Aviation NCO School. In the latter, was a group of young officers, whose leader was the engineer Major Oscar Tranco. This situation was similar to that of other Air Force bases, where small groups of young officers would embrace the revolutionary cause, and were looking among the middle hierarchy for someone who wanted to lead them, while, on the other hand, the higher ranks were all loyal to the government.

The coup aviators in Córdoba forged ties with those of Bombardment Group 1 stationed in Villa Reynolds, San Luis, whose officers were virtually all opposition, and undertook not to drop their bombs on the targets in the event of the coup.

On Tuesday 13th, Lonardi met with Señorans before leaving and they agreed that the latter should go to the coast to try to convince General Aramburu to join the revolution, while Major Guevara would accompany Lonardi and Ossorio in Córdoba. Lonardi and Guevara prepared a watchword for the revolutionaries: *Dios es Justo* (God is Fair). At two in the afternoon, Guevara knocked on General Lagos' door to inform him that the new head of the revolution had asked him to take command of the Second Army as of the 16th.

On the night of the 13th, the Lonardi family arrived in Córdoba by bus: Mercedes Villada Achával de Lonardi went to her brother's house, while the male children went to the Calixto de la Torre residence, where Ossorio Arana was waiting for them.



Facilities of the Military Aircraft Factory (FMA) in Córdoba (above). Production line of the I.Aé. 24 Calquín (right) and I.Aé. 22 DL (left) at the FMA (below). (Archivo General de la Nación)

Having been notified of the imminent revolutionary outbreak, General Lagos, his brother Carlos Lagos, and Dr Bonifacio del Carril set out for Cuyo. They arrived in San Luis in the afternoon of 14 September. They hoped they could take command without problems because Lagos had been the head of that garrison just two months before, so he knew everyone and was very popular. On the outskirts of the city, they secretly met with Commander-in-Chief Eugenio Arandía. They announced that General José Epifanio Sosa Molina, the minister's brother, had been appointed to the Second Command, and who had arrived from Buenos Aires, together with a group of the Federal Police, with orders to investigate the situation of the officers in order to prevent an uprising similar to the one that Videla Balaguer had tried unsuccessfully in the previous two weeks in Río Cuarto. Arandía added that the news of Lagos' presence in San Luis would trigger an intense search and his subsequent arrest by the police, and that the best thing was to try to meet Colonel Fernando Elizondo in Mendoza. Later Arandía met with the most fervently revolutionary officers: Lieutenant Colonels Eppens and Ávila, and Major Blanco, to update them.

On Wednesday 14th, Lonardi met with General Videla Balaguer, a refugee in Córdoba, in the apartment of Damián Fernández Astrada, head of a large command of civilians. Videla was in charge of coordinating the civilian subversive groups. To prevent rumours from spreading, Lonardi had established that civilians were not to be informed of the events until after the operations began.

At 10pm on the same day, a plenary meeting was held with the representatives of various Cordovan rebel groups: Major Melitón Quijano and Captain Ramón Molina (Artillery School), 1st Lieutenant Julio Fernández Torres (Airborne Troops), Major Oscar Tranco (Air Force NCOs), Captains Mario Efraín Arrabuarrena and Juan José Claisse (Military Lyceum). In the first place, it was decided not to use troops from the Military Lyceum, since it was an educational institution for minors and they had to be kept out of combat: only its officers would rise up, helping the paratroopers to take over their school.

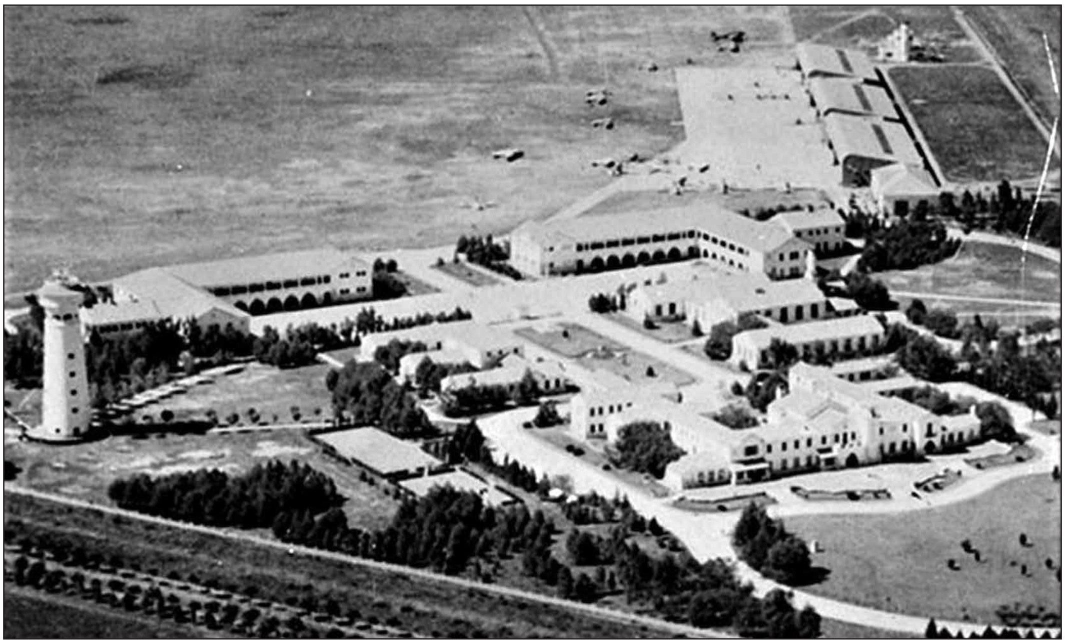
At this meeting, the uprising plan for Córdoba was presented:

The paratroopers would take over the School of Airborne Troops, detaining the non-commissioned officers loyal to the government and guarding the road to the city of Córdoba.

The Military Aviation School and the School of Air Force NCOs, whose officers were all rebels, would rise up.

The Artillery School would be taken over by Captain Ramón Molina, who would facilitate Lonardi's entry to direct the uprising throughout the country from there. Its director would be arrested. The batteries would immediately be deployed to fire on the Infantry School.

Captain Marguerit and Sub-Lt. Enrique Gómez Pueyrredón would facilitate entry into the Infantry School for paratroopers to occupy it.



The Military Aviation School (EMA) in Córdoba, *Alma Mater* of the Argentine military pilots since 10 August 1912. (Archivo General de la Nación)

Commander Palma had made known the imminent revolutionary uprising to the chain of naval links. A group of naval officers left for the south in two sections, Captain Arturo Rial bound for Comandante Espora air base, where he was to take charge of Naval Aviation, and Captain Mario Robbio, to collaborate with the uprising of the sea fleet.

In Córdoba, General Lonardi celebrated his 59th birthday with a religious ceremony and lunch at his brother-in-law's house, after which he said goodbye to his wife and left with Ossorio to the outskirts of the city, waiting for zero hour. In Bahía Blanca, in the afternoon, Captain Jorge Perren prepared the last details of the rebellion, by inviting those who were not in on the secret and arresting those who refused. At the neighbouring Comandante Espora naval air base, his boss – loyal to the constitutional authorities – had retired at 5:00 p.m., and the guard, led by Baubeau de Secondigé, awaited the arrival of the man who would take charge of revolutionary operations: Captain Andrews. Regarding the timing of the uprising, Perren decided that it was unwise to launch into operations with the personnel without sleeping, so he set the time for zero hour at 4:30 a.m., with the order to start immediately if news of the uprising in other parts of the country was heard.

After midnight, the meeting was dissolved, less than 24 hours were left before the start of operations.

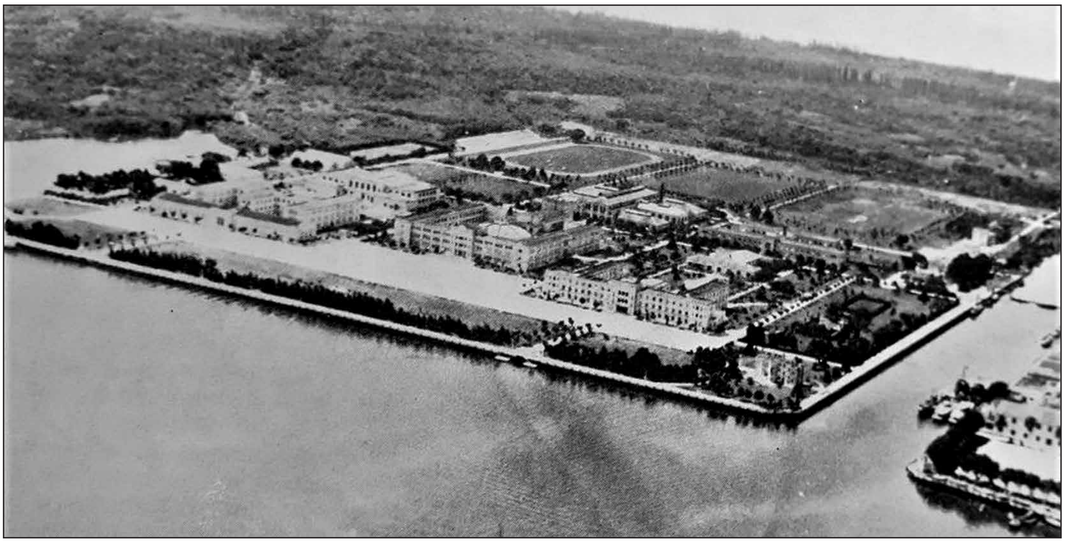
On Thursday 15th, a rebel officer issued an order with a forged signature, causing Colonel Sánchez Reynafé, loyal to the government, to leave Curuzú Cuatiá and travel to Buenos Aires. Meanwhile Señorans, Aramburu, Molinari and Arias Duval left to bring the town into revolt, together with the entire coastline. At the Río Santiago Naval Base (near La Plata), Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas gave notice of the imminent revolutionary outbreak to Captains Carlos Bourel, Director of the Naval School, and Luis M. García, commander of the base. The plan was to block the Río de la Plata to prevent the supply of fuels. On the island of Martín García, the Director of the School of Seamanship, Lieutenant Commander Juan Carlos González Llanos, had established extraordinary training in 'infantry and shooting' since April 1955, within the framework of the plot that would culminate on 16 September. On the 15th, he was informed of the imminence of the revolution and the request to embark for Río Santiago as soon as the beginning became known.

Navy Captain Rial (seated, centre), Commander of the Southern Revolutionary Area, planning operations at the Espora naval Air base, with his collaborators, Captain Galmarini (seated, left), the base doctor, Lieutenant Escudero and Captains Gallastegui, Andrews and López. (Argentine Navy)

In Buenos Aires, no army unit was ready to revolt because the Army Ministry had carefully selected the officers most loyal to the government to command them. The officers who wanted to rebel and had no destination formed a group, coordinated by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Kurt Brenner and Rodolfo Kössler, who, as a precaution, communicated in German. They had met at 4:00 p.m. at the Constitución station, to travel by train to La Plata and from there reinforce the Naval Academy.

In the city of Buenos Aires, the only action would be that of the civil commandos whose mission was to shut down the main radio antennas to prevent the news of an uprising against Perón from spreading prematurely. The operation was successful and once the airwaves of the main radio stations had disappeared in Buenos Aires, the radio stations of Córdoba, Uruguay and Puerto Belgrano could be clearly heard. However, the Buenos Aires authorities detected this unusual upheaval and it would be precisely these commandos that would give the first alarm signal to the national authorities.

At 12:30 a.m., Minister Lucero was awakened by his assistant, Colonel Díaz, and informed about the complaint made by a director of the Mercedes Benz company in Argentina: an employee of the company had told him that he knew that Lieutenant-Colonel Heriberto Kurt Brenner would fold to a revolution in the following hours. Lucero went to the Ministry and urgently summoned the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Molina, the Chief of the General Staff, General Wirth, the Undersecretary of the Ministry, General José Embrioni, and the Chief of the Information Service, General Sánchez Toranzo. He also enlisted the Buenos Aires garrison. Then Lucero called the commander of the 4th Army Division, based



Facilities of the Argentine Military Naval School in Rio Santiago, near La Plata. (Argentine Navy)

in Córdoba, but its commander, General Alberto Morello, replied that they were 'without incident.' After that, a series of news reports from the police began to arrive since groups of armed civilians had been seen in Vicente López, Palermo, Ciudadela, Ramos Mejía, and at the naval hospital. At 4:00 a.m., the Federal Police issued an urgent message: 'General alert. Tonight, armed civilian groups are going to disrupt order and try to take over heads of units and legally constituted authorities. Act energetically and repress any attempt to disturb the order.'

The minister believed that the events were predominantly civil in nature. Around dawn, the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires announced from La Plata (then called 'Ciudad Eva Perón') suspicious activities at the neighbouring Río Santiago Naval Base; later the presence of Lonardi and Ossorio Arana in Córdoba was also reported. Lucero woke General Perón, who immediately moved to the headquarters of the Ministry of War.

At 00:00 on Friday 16 September, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas established his staff with Captains Jorge Palma, Sánchez Sañudo, Silvio Cassinelli and Andrés Troppea. The cadets of the Naval Academy were offered the option of not bowing down to the blow and not embarking; however they all did. Captain Perren received the news of the uprising in Río Santiago at three in the morning and proceeded to arrest their superiors.

2

THE SEPTEMBER *COUP D'ÉTAT*, DAY BY DAY

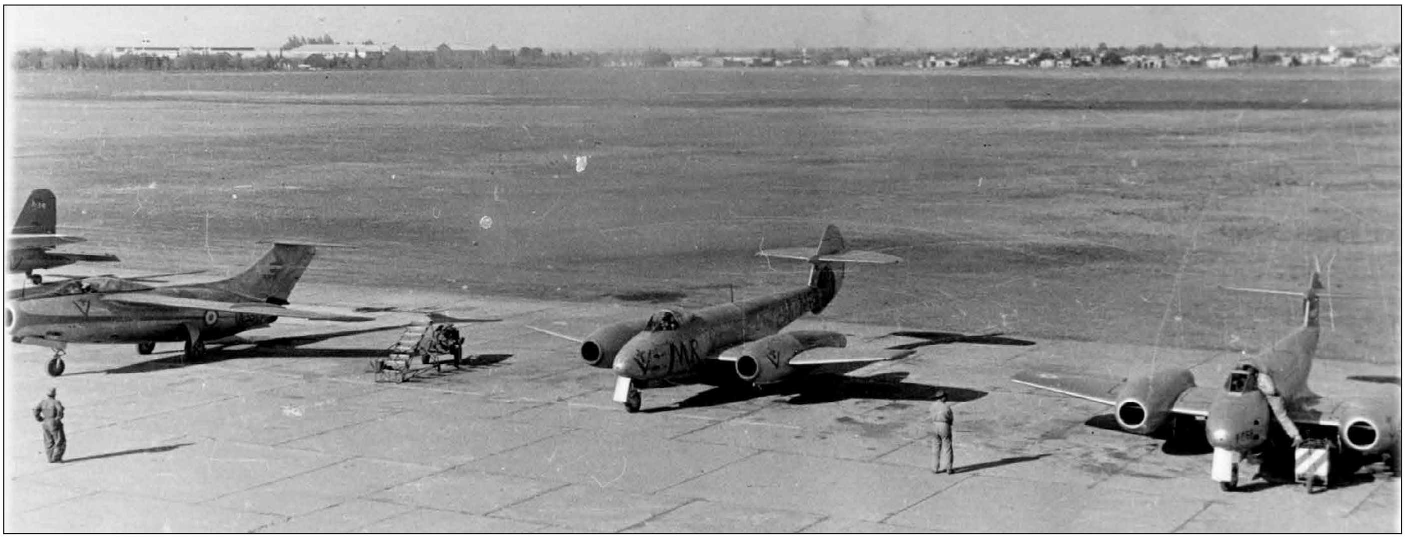
Friday 16 September 1955

On 16 September 1955, some units of the Armed Forces launched a series of actions in different parts of the country with the aim of overthrowing the government. The rebels were initially made up of some units of the Army and Air Force and the entire Navy. Among the first units in the uprising was the Artillery School under General Lonardi, fighting against the Infantry School, which remained loyal. In addition, the Córdoba Air Garrison, the Curuzú Cuatiá armoured unit and the Río Santiago and Puerto Belgrano Naval Bases also rose. This operation had the support of several opposition political parties, the Catholic Church and civil commandos. The government reacted by implementing the *COMINTES* Plan (Inner State Commotion Plan), which involved the mobilisation of all the Army and Air Force units loyal to Perón.

President Perón immediately declared a state of siege and subsequently a curfew between 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m was established. Preparations began for the defence of Government House, the port area and the Federal Capital airport, then called 'Aeroparque 17 de Octubre', with army units with anti-aircraft batteries and armoured vehicles. For their part, General Lucero with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General José Domingo Molina, took care to immediately organise the suppression of the revolting units. Besides, he had also summoned the Chief of General Staff, General Wirth, the Undersecretary General Embrioni, and the Chief of Information General Sánchez Toranzo. The generals who would be in charge of commanding the loyal forces were appointed: General Heraclio Ferrazzano, commander of the Second Army Division, would operate against the Rio Santiago naval base, with the support of the Air Force.

General José María Sosa Molina, who led the loyal troops of the Cuyo Second Army. (Public Domain)

Against Puerto Belgrano and the Naval Aviation Comandante Espora Base, General Eusebio Molinuevo would lead the Third Cavalry Division and the Fourth Mountain Division, under the command of General Ramón Boucherie, and the Motorised Group of General Cáceres.



Some of the revolutionary aircraft, from left to right, the tail of a Calquín, the Pulqui II 4th Prototype and a pair of Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4s in Córdoba, all with the insignia of 'Cristo Vence' and the initials 'MR'. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo).

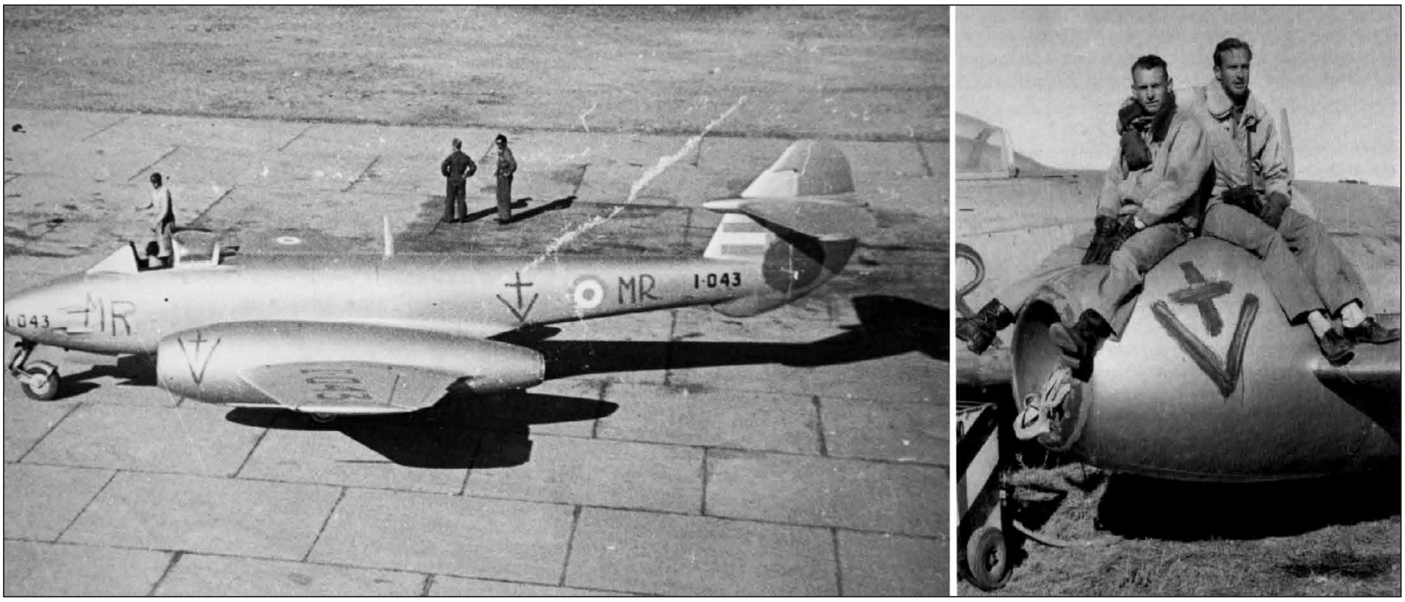
General Carlos Salinas would command the Third and Fourth Cavalry Divisions of Generals Giorello and Lubín Arias, and General Font's Seventh Army Division against the rebellious forces in Curuzú Cuatiá.

For the Córdoba area, General José María Sosa Molina would lead the troops of the Second Army of Cuyo, with the Fourth Division under General Morello, the Fifth Division of the North under General Moschini and a Brigade under General Iñíguez.

At dawn on that day, the revolutionary movement began at the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base, with personnel from the Argentine Navy, in the city of Córdoba, with personnel from the Army and Air Force, and in Curuzú Cuatiá, Corrientes, in charge of the Army. During this uprising, elements of all three branches of the armed forces clashed with each other, causing severe damage to facilities and materials, as well as loss of human life and numerous injured people.

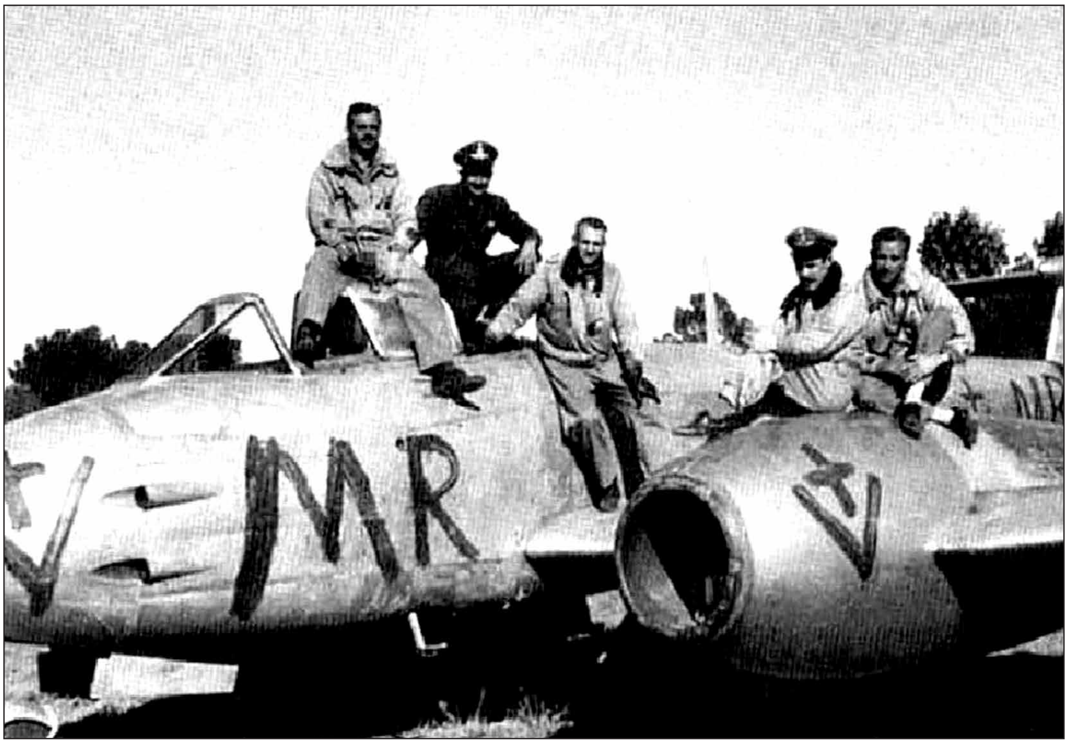
In Córdoba, the movements had really started at 11:20 p.m. the previous day. Commodore Alejandro Machado, Director of the Air Force NCO School, had organised a birthday party for his wife and had invited all the garrison chiefs and their wives, including the Air Force Commander of the area, Brigadier Raúl Lacabanne. Thirty-six revolutionary officers of the Air Force interrupted the party and arrested all the loyal officers altogether. They did not wait for midnight because at that point the guests would have begun to disperse.

Then some officers commanded by Captain Ricardo Castellanos crossed the road to the Military Aircraft Factory (FMA), where they were sure that the 50 engineering officers were going to join the revolution, which they did. Then Captain Maldonado took over the Military Aviation School, where Commodore Julio César Krausse lived. Krausse was a well-known anti-Peronist who was briefed on the situation and offered command of the rebel air force. Krausse wore his uniform and, as a first measure, ordered the release of Commander Jorge Martínez Zuviría and put him in command of the NCO School. Both the Military Aviation School (*EAM*) and the IAME (*Industrias Aeronáuticas y Mecánicas del Estado*, Aeronautical and Mechanical Industries of the State) joined the revolutionary movement. At the Córdoba Aviation School, the aircraft were varied and intended mainly for instruction. Several officers went about getting them ready for combat, re-assembling cannons and installing bombs. This time, badges were painted on the Air Force



Gloster Meteor F.Mk.4 serial I-043 with revolutionary markings (left). Two revolutionary pilots, 1st Lieutenants Hellmuth Weber and Eduardo Rossi (right). (Via Vladimiro Cettolo)

Revolutionary fighter pilots in Córdoba: Weber, Balado, Suárez, Herrero and Rossi. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)



Revolutionary fighter pilots with a Gloster Meteor F.4. From left to right: Officers Suárez, Herrero, Weber, Balado and Rossie. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

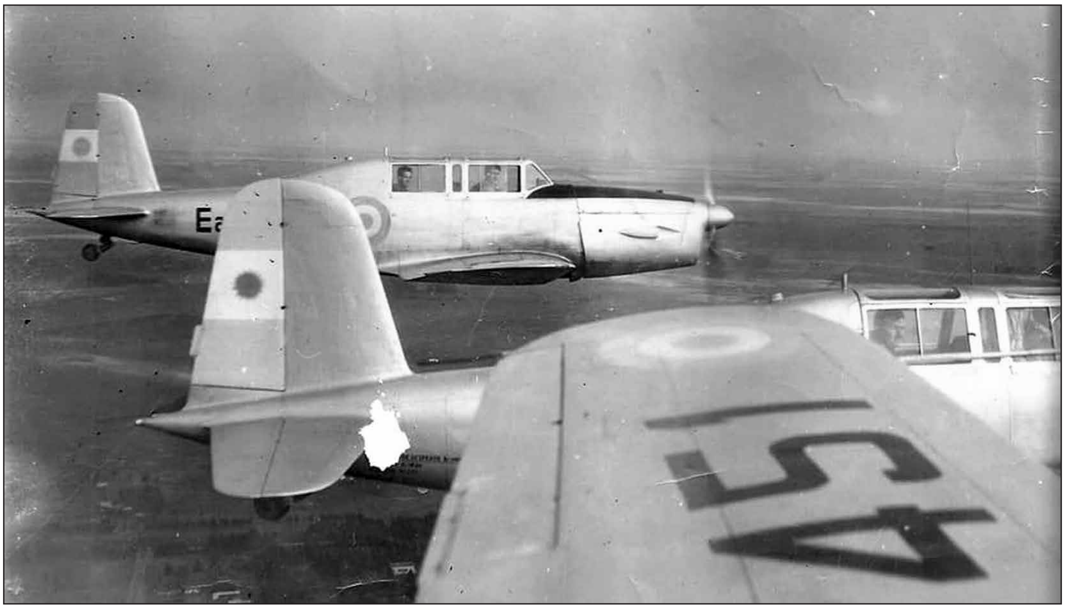
and Naval Aviation aircraft; some were first identified with 'MR' (*Movimiento Revolucionario*; Revolutionary Movement) but then the sign of *Cristo Vence* (Christ Wins) was adopted. Faced with the possible attack on its facilities by forces loyal to the government, all the aircraft stationed there were used, including the I.Aé. 33 Pulqui II fighter 4th prototype, being loaded with ammunition, for missions of air defence, support to ground forces and the escort of revolutionary bombers. For this purpose, all the aircraft used by the revolutionaries, including the Pulqui II, would receive the marks of *Cristo Vence* on the fuselage, on the left-hand side, near the cockpit. In addition to the Pulqui II, several Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4s, a pair of Calquín light bombers, some Fiat G.46 and Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan were also used. There is evidence that the Pulqui II, piloted by Captain Jorge Lisandro Suárez, participated in some actions during the revolutionary movement, judging by various testimonies and photographic evidence that showed that its four 20mm Hispano-Suiza guns had been used on ground targets.

All the flight instructors from the Military Aviation School made themselves available to the Revolutionary Command, including First Lieutenants Hellmuth Conrado Weber, Rossi and Luis Morandini, as well as Rogelio Balado and Alberto Herrero. The rebels were able to take control of five Meteors, identified as I-009, I-043, I-061, I-066 and I-079, which were under maintenance at the military aircraft factory in Córdoba, which were used in various attacks on ground targets beginning on 17 September, they were crewed by 1st Lieutenant Rogelio Balado, 1st Lieutenant Alberto Herrero, Capt. Jorge L. Suarez, 1st Lieutenant Eduardo Rossi, 1st Lieutenant Hellmuth Weber and Lieutenant Alberto Morandini. Upon returning from one of those missions, the Meteor crewed by 1st Lieutenant Balado had more than 15 bullet holes in its structure, demonstrating the ferocity of the fighting.

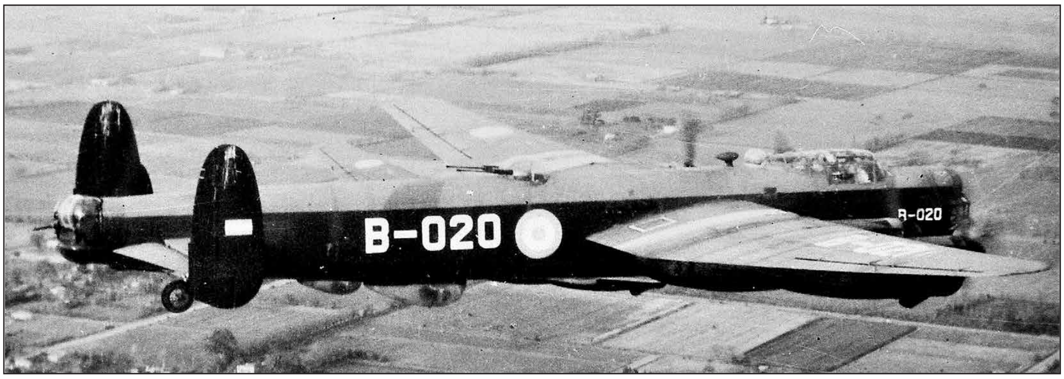
At the Army Ministry, it was thought that it was a civil uprising but that was put aside as communications from the interior arrived. At 4:55 a.m., police officers from the city of Gualeguaychú reported the presence of Señorans and Aramburu in the area. At 6.45 a.m., a dispatch arrived from Córdoba announcing that the Artillery School was in revolt under the command of General Lonardi. At 7:30 a.m., it became known that the Córdoba air base was also in the hands of the rebels. An hour later, information on the rebellion in Río Santiago arrived. As well as all that, communications with the Navy Sea Fleet were cut off.

The city of Córdoba was the epicentre of the rebel ground forces. As there were already rumours of different revolutionary movements, Minister General Lucero ordered the Infantry School to prepare for any eventuality. Colonel Brizuela telephoned the Artillery School, but was informed that its Director, Colonel

An Argentine Air Force Beechcraft AT-11 Kansan light bomber. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo)



Argentine Air Force Fiat G.46 advanced armed trainers. (*Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina*)

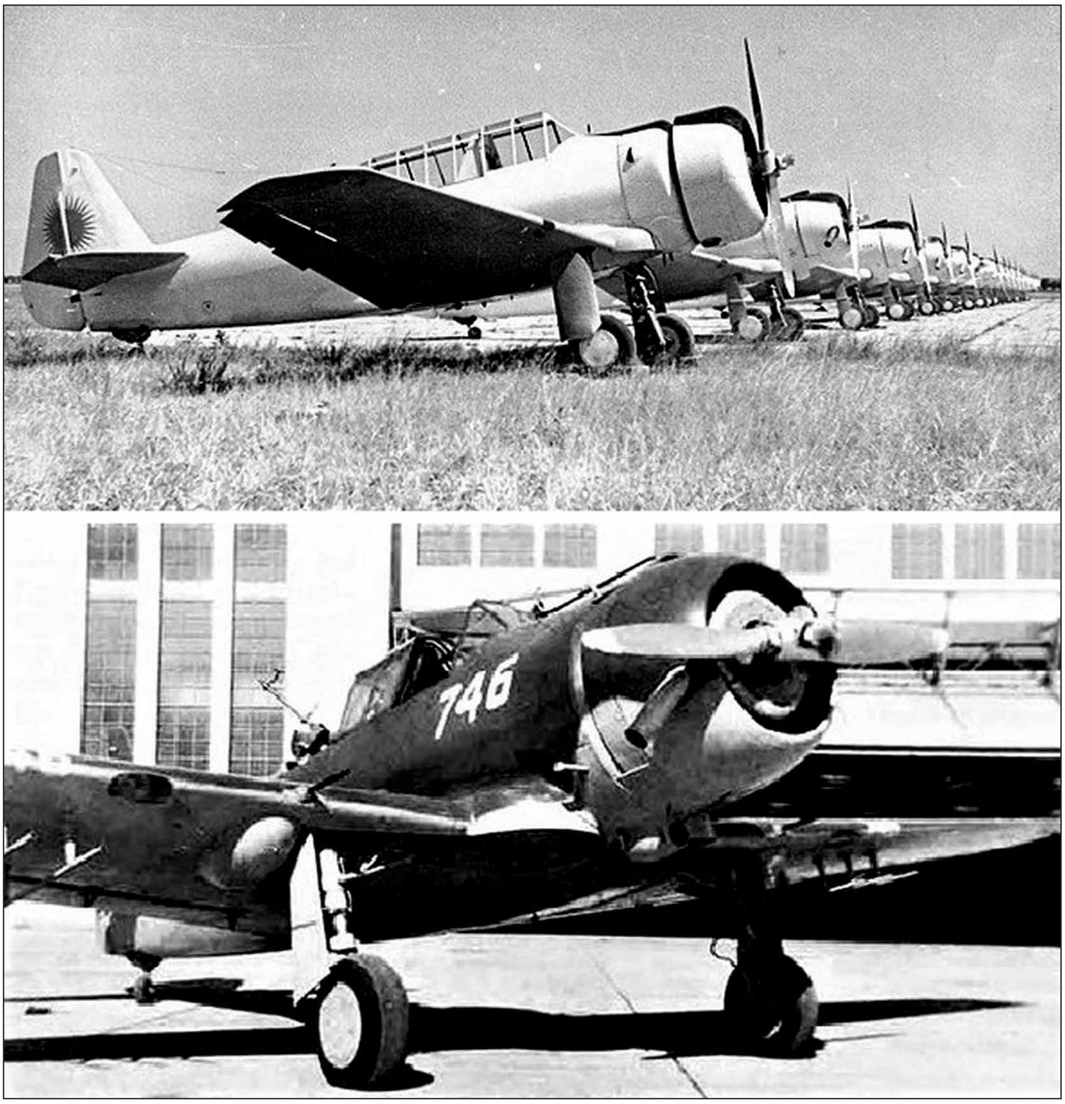


Avro Lincoln heavy bomber serial number B-020 in the mid–1950s. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

Turconi, was ‘touring the facilities.’ In reality, the Artillery School was already under Lonardi’s command, and Turconi was in custody. Later, Captain Correa telephoned Brizuela, this time announcing that General Lonardi wanted to speak to him. Brizuela cut off communication, so faced with the impossibility of communicating again, and with the loss of the surprise factor, Lonardi ordered the gunners to fire on the Infantry School. The first attack was carried out by the Artillery School (A.4) under the command of Lieutenant-General Eduardo Lonardi and Colonel Arturo Ossorio Arana on the Infantry School (R.13). The Infantry School responded with mortar and machine gun fire. The attack caused extensive damage to the facilities and surprised many of its members. The breaking of the power lines and the ensuing darkness made the organisation of the infantry very difficult. At dawn, only 1,800 of the 3,000 troops were under Brizuela’s command, mainly due to the desertion of conscript soldiers who were on military service. With the first light of day, the infantrymen began to turn the situation around and managed to surround the gunners. The manoeuvre left the building of the Infantry School defenceless, and it was occupied by the rebel airborne troops led by Captain Claisse. However, before the imminent fall of the gunners, he had to go back to help them. Since artillery has a minimum firing range, with the infantrymen too close there was no other option but to retreat. A second difficulty was turning the guns to target the infantrymen who, after the enveloping manoeuvre, were now behind him.

The fighting lasted until 11:00 a.m. and ended with the surrender of the forces loyal to the government, right after a conversation between heads of both factions. Although the infantry were numerically superior to the gunners, they were almost out of ammunition. On the revolutionaries side, Lieutenant-Colonel Ernesto Frías, retired Captain David Julio Uriburu and private Irineo Castro lost their lives, these being the first casualties of the coup d’état. Captain Mario Efraín Arruabarrena, Lieutenant José Alfredo Viola Dellepiane and soldier Eloy Fuentes of the School of Airborne Troops, which provided support to the revolutionaries, also lost their lives. On the side loyal to the government, the troops killed in combat at the Infantry School were Corporal Miguel San Juan and soldiers Héctor Romero, Luis Peralta, Rosas Becerra, Abel Funes, Ramón Gaitán, José Pereyra, Eduardo Tomas, Celso Zuceti and Mario Trivellini.

The attack on the Infantry School also had air support from the Military Aviation School aircraft, using Beechcraft AT-11 light bombers, Avro Lincoln heavy bombers, IAe DL-22 and Fiat G.46 armed trainers, and Gloster Meteor jet fighters. The operations focused on reconnaissance of enemy targets and bombardment



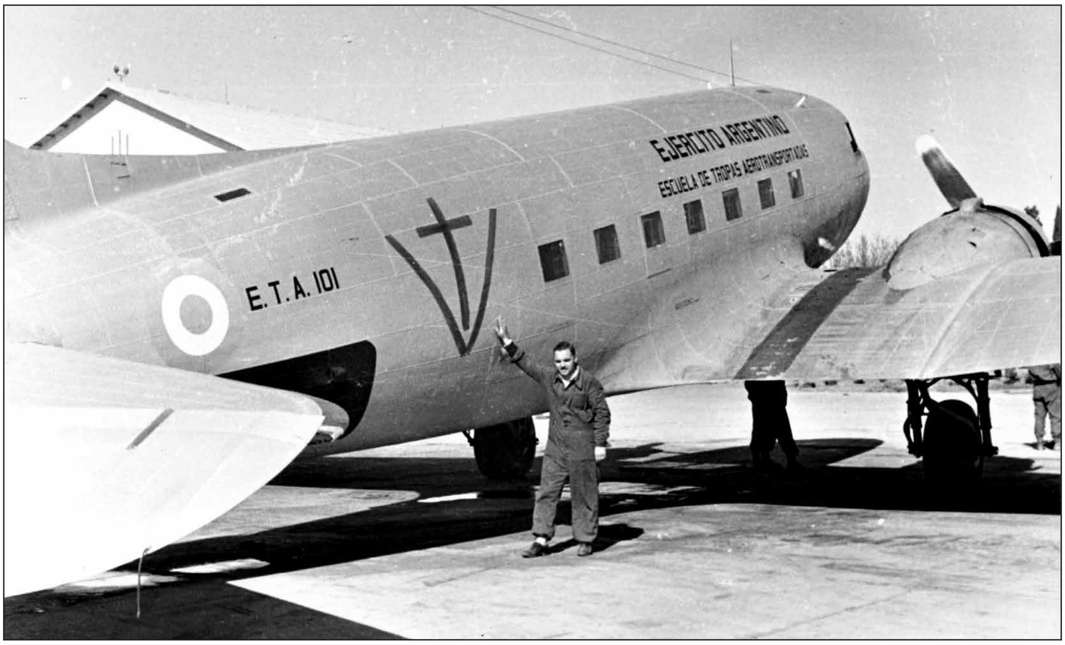
A line-up of locally manufactured I.Aé. 22 DL trainers (top). An armed and camouflaged I.Aé. 22 DL light attack aircraft (bottom). (Georg Von Rauch)

Three revolutionaries' Gloster Meteor F.Mk.4 interceptor fighters and a Calquín light bomber. (Dr Atilio Marino via Vladimiro Cettolo)

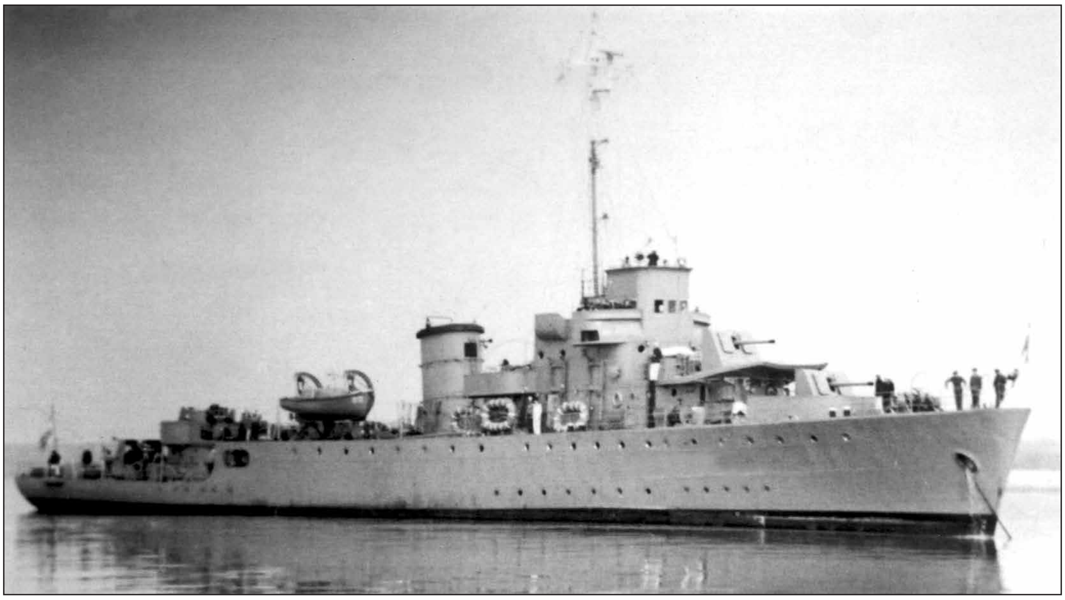
with napalm of the columns of loyal troops advancing on the city of Córdoba, from Deán Funes to Anizacate. Faced with the shortage of bombs in Córdoba, the revolutionaries sent another Avro Lincoln to the Villa Reynolds base. The bomber was commanded by the 1st Lieutenant Manuel Turrado Juárez with a full crew, including four officers and five NCOs. An hour after taking off, the Lincoln had mechanical problems and crashed in the Río Cuarto area, killing its entire crew.

Distrust reigned in the Morón Air Base, headquarters of the air squads loyal to the government, since the Calquín pilots made a pass over the Santiago River and their shots failed to hit any target – something highly improbable from such trained pilots. Bombardment Group No. 1, based in the province of San Luis, had also been summoned to the Morón base. There the first two pilots to arrive, Captains Orlando Cappellini and Ricardo Rossi, were warned by the commander-in-chief of the Force, Brigadier Juan Fabri, who sensed their revolutionary intentions: 'Look: I know how you two think; it's how we all think. But I ask you to carry out the orders at this time, because later there will be time to do what we all want.' They were then ordered to fly their Avro Lincolns to Córdoba and observe the situation at the Artillery School; instead, they landed at the Military Aviation School and joined the uprising. That afternoon, they would be followed by three others: Captain Fernando González Bosque, 1st Lieutenant Dardo Lafalce and Manuel Turrado Juárez. The emotional impact on both sides was immense; from these facts, the word 'pancake' began to be used, because the aircraft 'turn over in the air' (or literally, changed sides).

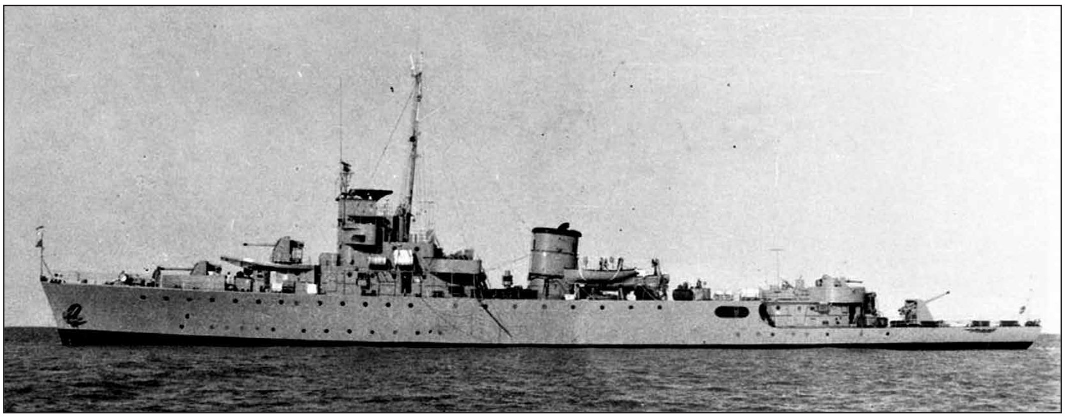
When the Air Force Commander Brigadier Juan Fabri learned that two Lincoln bombers had joined the revolution, he gave orders for three Gloster Meteor fighters to take off and fly to Córdoba to destroy them. They were crewed by Major Daniel Pedro Aubone, who had been trained by Adolf Galland in 1948 in Tandil, Commander Eduardo Catalá and Captain Amauri Domínguez. Ventral fuel tanks were fitted to extend the Meteor's range of action. They took off from the Morón Air Base bound for the town of Rio Cuarto, followed by a Douglas C-47 with mechanics, gunsmiths and equipment. While all this was happening, a third Lincoln, under the command of Captain Fernando González Bosque, took off for Córdoba, to join the revolutionaries. Upon reaching the destination, he communicated



The revolutionary forces in Córdoba also secured three Douglas C-47s that belonged to the Army School of Airborne Troops, on which the revolutionary markings were painted. (Vladimiro Cettolo Collection)



Patrol Boat P-21 ARA *King*. (Histarmar Archives)

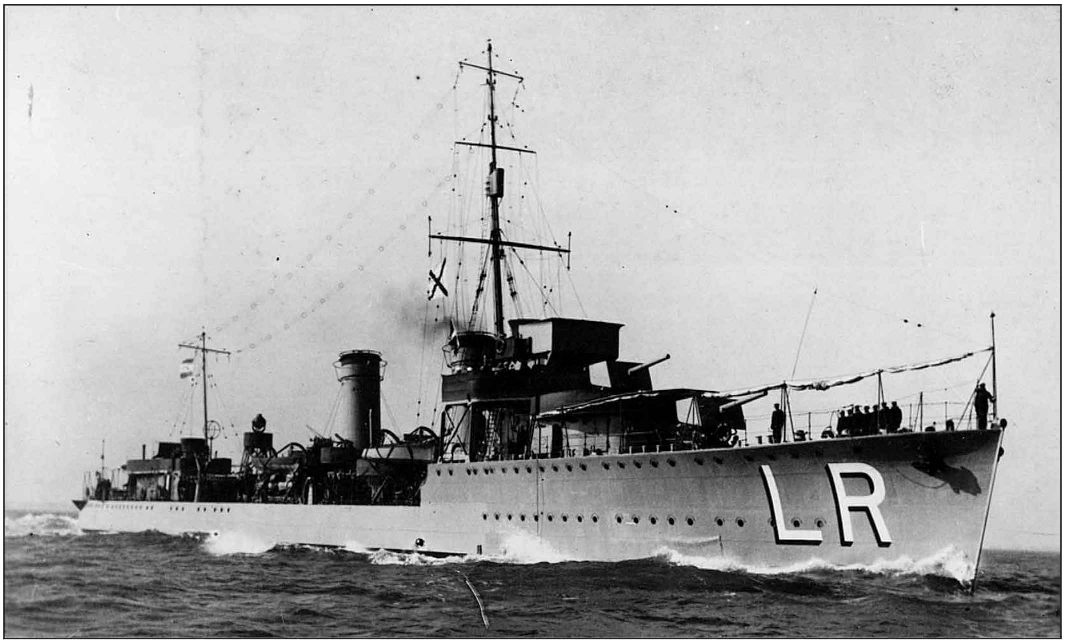


Patrol Boat P-20 ARA *Murature*. (Histarmar Archives)

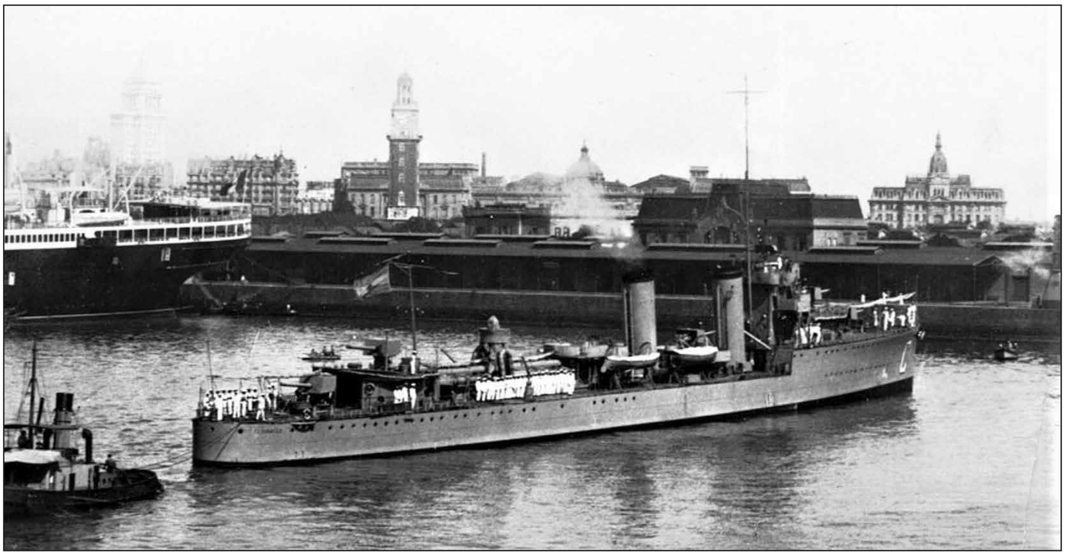
to Commodore Krausse the government's plan of attack, for which a preventive attack was ordered on the Las Higueras base, to disable the Meteor fighters stationed there, early in the morning on the following day.

Since midnight General Dalmiro Videla Balaguer was in a *petit-hotel* in Alta Córdoba, where he installed his command. Around 40 civilian commandos and some revolutionary leaders had gathered there. The house was later surrounded by police officers and a shootout began between the two factions. Given the numerical inferiority of the effectives commanded by Videla Balaguer, help was requested by telephone, so Revolutionary Air Force troops were sent, who managed to reduce the police. Later that day, at downtown Córdoba, groups of civil commandos with the support of cadets of the Military Aviation School and also soldiers from the Air Force and the Army, under the command of General Videla Balaguer, had as their objective the taking of the Cabildo and the Police Headquarters. The combat with the police forces lasted about 45 minutes and ended with the surrender of all police effectives, after suffering four deaths and numerous injured effectives.

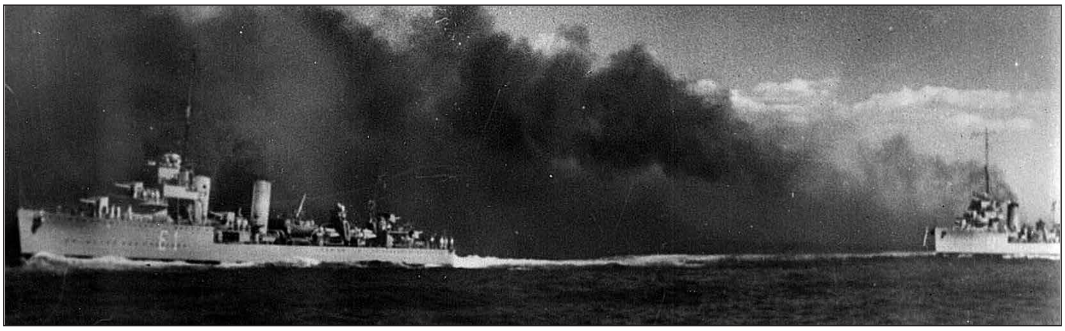
In Curuzú Cuatiá, province of Corrientes, a group of civilians was preparing for the arrival of the revolutionary leaders: Enrique Arballo, José Rafael and Julio César Cáceres Monié, Juan Labarthe, Mario de León, and some others. Pedro E. Ramírez, son of the former President, collaborated with them. On the 16th at midnight, Major Montiel Forzano began to take over the units stationed in that city. By early morning the entire city was in rebel hands, and the civil commandos had occupied the public buildings. The surprise and speed of the operations had avoided casualties on both sides. The Revolutionary Command, led by General Aramburu, Colonels Señorans and Arias Duval, and the Navy Commander Aldo Molinari arrived at the armour garrison of Curuzú Cuatiá and captured Lieutenant-Colonel Frazer, the commander of the unit, and all of the officers loyal to the government. The NCOs remained loyal to the government and so were locked in a warehouse under



Torpedo Ship/Destroyer T-4 ARA *La Rioja.* (Histarmar Archives)



Torpedo Ship/Destroyer T-1 ARA *Cervantes.* (Histarmar Archives)



Both torpedo boats/destroyers ARA *Cervantes* and ARA *La Rioja*, producing a heavy smokescreen during the attack by a section of Gloster Meteors loyal to the government on 16 September 1955. (Histarmar Archives)

armed guard. The revolutionary troops under the command of Major Eduardo Samyn took the Armoured School and its maintenance workshop, where there were 50 tanks and half-tracks, by surprise. All officers, NCOs and troops who declared themselves loyal to the government were placed under armed guard. While all this was taking place, revolutionary civil commandos seized all the important public buildings in the city – the municipality, the bank, the post office and telephones, the railway station and the police station. At the end of the day, some officers and NCOs who had proclaimed themselves revolutionaries began to doubt the success of the uprising and, to avoid reprisals, they went over to the government side, freeing the prisoners and retaking the base. The few revolutionary officers had to flee. Coronel Sánchez Reynafé, once again, took command of the military unit.

Another rebel focus was the area of the city of Ensenada, where naval units crossed the Santiago River to take the city of La Plata, but encountered stubborn resistance from the police forces loyal to the government and supported by numerous civilians, later reinforced with loyal troops of the 7th Infantry Regiment from La Plata. Faced with loyal forces outnumbering them, the naval troops withdrew amid heavy covering fire from the patrol boats ARA *King* (P-20) and ARA *Murature* (P-21). Gloster Meteor fighters and Avro Lincoln bombers loyal to the government bombed and machine-gunned the Naval Academy facilities and the aforementioned vessels, causing 10 deaths among NCOs and naval conscripts. At 10:30 p.m., an officer from the Navy Coast Guard met the Commander of the 7th Infantry Regiment informing that the naval base surrendered and requested authorisation to evacuate the wounded to the naval hospital.

Among the aircraft actively used on both sides were the Calquín light bombers, from the IV Air Brigade. At the beginning of operations, this unit remained loyal to the government. A large part of the young officers, from lieutenants to captains, had secretly resolved not to comply with orders to suppress any who rose up in rebellion, while nevertheless the Air Force NCOs were mostly loyal to the Perón government. They could get 35 I.Aé. 24 Calquín attack aircraft on the flight line to assist the authorities. At dawn on the 16th, two Calquín squadrons that had been deployed to Morón between the 6th and the 15th, were loaded with ammunition and 50 kilogramme bombs, and were being guarded by Air Force

NCOs, armed with Halcón machine guns, who would not allow any possible desertion.

As soon as it was learned that the naval fleet had dropped moorings in Rio Santiago with the intention of blocking access to Buenos Aires, the enlistment of two sections of four Air Force Gloster Meteor F.4 loyal to the government was ordered. Two torpedo ships/destroyers – ARA *La Rioja* (T-4), commanded by Commander Rafael Palomeque, and ARA *Cervantes* (T-1), commanded by Commander Pedro Gnavi – set sail from the Naval School. At 9:30 a.m., these ships were attacked by a Gloster Meteor section of the Air Force led by Vice Commodore Carlos Sister. The Meteors attacked from the stern to the bow at low level, firing their weapons above the level of the waterline, and achieving numerous hits. In the first attack, the ARA *La Rioja* was hit several times, and in the second attack, led by Vice Commodore Pérez Laborda, both ships were hit. The flotilla withdrew into the river, but continued to be harassed by the Meteors and also some Calquín light bombers. There were two more attacks against the destroyers, which caused one dead and 14 wounded on board ARA *La Rioja* and 21 wounded on board ARA *Cervantes*. The Calquín bombers dropped bombs on both ships, but they fell 500 metres away, probably so as not to damage the ships and cause more casualties.

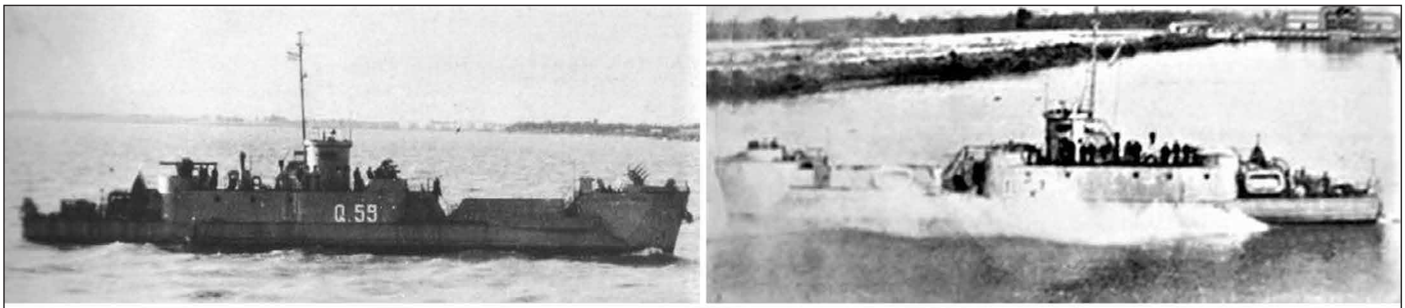
After 4:00 p.m., the Government Repression Command prepared a mission commissioning three Lincoln bombers, with 18 bombs each, and recommending that their crewmembers strictly comply with their orders to bomb the Rio Santiago naval base and the Naval Military School. At 5:00 p.m., these Lincolns took off from Morón but headed for the city of Córdoba. Given this fact, they were ordered to return to their base immediately, an order that was not followed by the crew, who continued their flight to Córdoba, where they finally arrived at 8:00 p.m., and joined the revolutionaries. Nonetheless, a formation of six Calquín light bombers and some Lincolns carried out this mission, but the aiming of the bombs was very imprecise, in part due to the intense anti-aircraft fire of the two patrol boats, the ARA *King* and the ARA *Murature*, which were anchored in the dock. However, both suffered slight damage as a result of the blast from the bombs. There were testimonies, such as that of Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Daviou of the ARA *King*, which stated that a 40mm Bofors grenade hit the lower turret of an attacking Avro Lincoln that day, and that the Calquín serial number A-97 suffered a huge hole in one of its wings, near the fuselage. For his part, Captain Francisco Pucci of the ARA *Murature* confirmed the damage to a Calquín and a Lincoln described. Other testimonies mentioned another Calquín, serial number A-91, that suffered some anti-aircraft hits, which damaged the flaps and the auxiliary fuel tank and as a consequence of which it had to make an emergency landing.

In Bahía Blanca, Captain Arturo Rial was in charge of the 'Southern Revolutionary Command,' which included the Comandante Espora naval air base and Puerto Belgrano. They radioed the head of the nearby 5th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Albrizzi, who replied that the unit did not support the uprising but that it would remain in its barracks. This inactivity was greeted with relief by the rebels. That day, the Naval Aviation Consolidated Model 28-5AMC Catalina, serial number 0275/2-P-7, bombed some loyal Army troops near the Comandante Espora naval air base. The North American AT-6 Texans of the Attack Squadron that had been concentrated at Comandante Espora naval air base were reactivated. They carried out patrol, reconnaissance and harassment flights in defence of the Puerto Belgrano-Bahía Blanca area, together with some Beech AT-11 Kansan. Texans from the Naval Aviation School (*EAN*) also took part in these missions.

Meanwhile, the powerful sea fleet was anchored in Puerto Madryn, under the command, of Admiral Juan B. Basso, who remained faithful to the government. At noon on the 16th, Captain Robbio departed on a solitary flight from Espora base to Madryn with the intention of raising it in revolt.

The ARA *La Rioja* sustained significant damage and several casualties during the Meteor fighter attack. (Histarmar Archives)

Argentine naval base at Puerto Madryn, Chubut, in the south of Argentina. (Public Domain)



Argentine Navy LCIL Q-59 ARA *BDI No. 6* and LCIL Q-56 ARA *BDI No. 11* vessels, transporting Marine troops which were attacked by loyal Gloster Meteor jet fighters on 16 September 1955 (top). (Histarmar Archives)
The Seamanship School was located on Martín García Island which was also a naval air base (bottom). (Public Domain)

In Córdoba, General Videla Balaguer and some 40 revolutionary civilians, some under the orders of the radical deputy Miguel Ángel Yadarola, had been surrounded by the police and members of the army. Sixty heavily armed effectives of the Air Force NCO School went to Alta Córdoba to help them, which was done successfully. On the other hand, the Artillery School was also surrounded, and the situation was so critical that Ossorio and Lonardi vowed to fight to death.

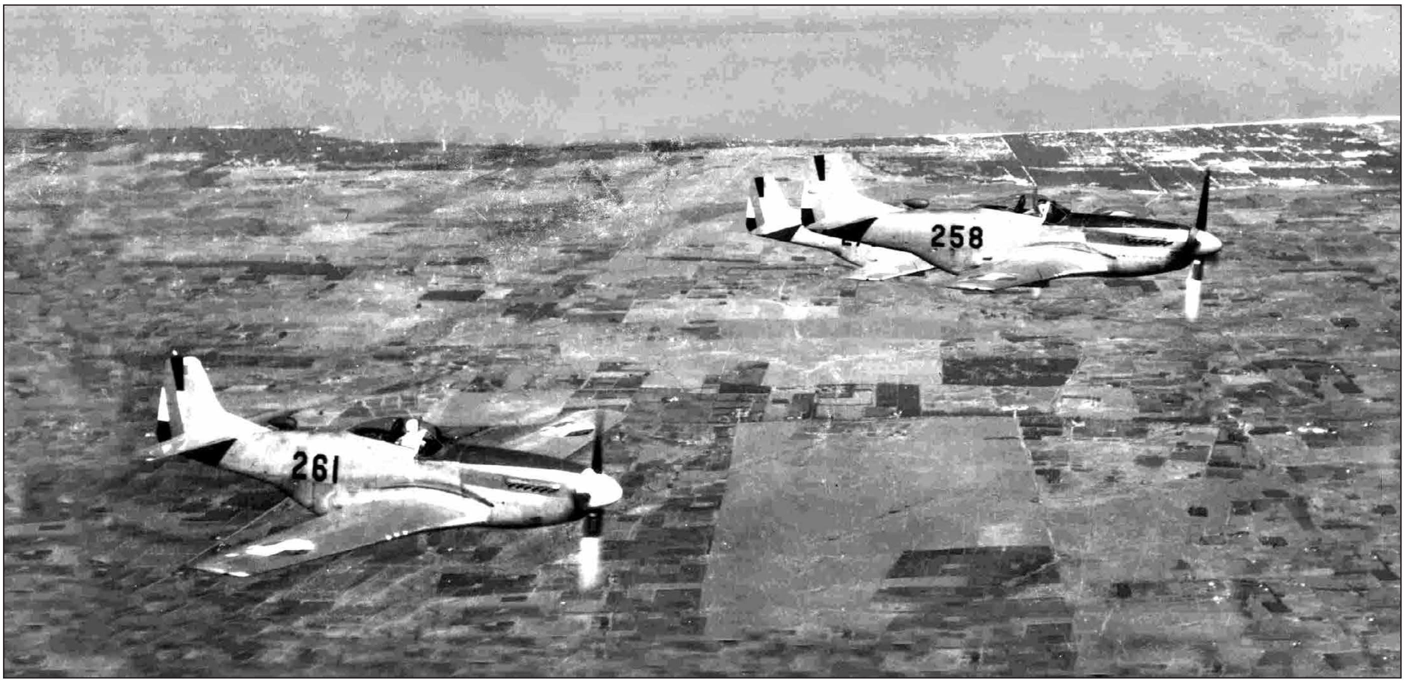
At that moment, the fact that the Infantry School had attacked by surprise 'with all brutality' at the beginning of the conflict began to show its effect, running out of ammunition, and its Director, Brizuela, was forced to propose a cessation of hostilities. Lonardi said that his intention was to pacify the country under the slogan 'neither victorious nor vanquished' and therefore, he offered that his troops pay respects to those who had surrendered. Thus, the Infantry School paraded with their weapons before the Artillery and Airborne Troops, and then they surrendered their weapons and gave a promise not to resume hostilities against the revolution.

Commodore Julio César Krause, in command of the rebel Air Force in Córdoba, after the return of the delegation that had liberated Videla Balaguer, sent a group of civilians and some soldiers to occupy the radio stations to use them for revolutionary purposes. Led by Captain Sergio Quiroga, they had several clashes with the police, but the police officers had no interest in dying fighting the revolutionaries.

At 11:00 a.m., several loyal Army units were in La Plata, encircling the Río Santiago base and attacking the bridgehead that the rebel sailors had established on the mainland. At that same time, in Curuzú Cuatiá the official radios were heard announcing the failure of the uprising throughout the country. At twelve o'clock midday a plane flew over the town releasing pamphlets with the same information. Several officers who had joined the rebel side asked to be arrested and locked up with the loyalists, until a group of more than 100 non-commissioned officers was able to escape from their captors, seize their weapons, and take over the Armoured School. After a long firefight, a truce was agreed: The Armoured School would remain passive, without being forced to obey the Rebel Command.

Lieutenant Commander Hugo Crexel, by direct order of Perón, commanded a group of planes that, together with the crew of Vice Commodore Sister, attacked the ships of the Naval School. Faced with the power of the aerial attack, the ships moved away from Buenos Aires: and thus, they moved out of the range of the planes, which began to attack the base of Río Santiago. First, a number of pamphlets fell on the base announcing the defeat of the revolution throughout the country, and then the bombardment began. However, a massive firepower had been concentrated on the Rio Santiago Base, and as a consequence, two planes were damaged and could not be used.

At noon on 16 September, the rebels controlled certain key areas in Córdoba, Curuzú Cuatiá, Río Santiago, and Bahía Blanca. The Air Force appeared to remain loyal to the government. Nothing was known about the army in Cuyo and there was no news of the Navy Sea Fleet. Perón had left the Ministry of War at 10:30 a.m. One of the first actions of the loyal elements of the Air Force was the mission carried out by the Calquín light bombers, whose crews were ordered to bomb the Rio Santiago naval base, which had risen in rebellion. The first attack only took place at 1:00 p.m., when five I.Aé.24 Calquín light bombers and four Gloster Meteor fighters attacked the LCIL vessels No. 6 and No. 11 of the Navy. These vessels were sailing in the vicinity of the La Plata towards the Rio Santiago



Uruguayan Air Force (*FAU*) North American P-51D Mustang fighters that were dispatched to provide aerial protection to the damaged ships of the Argentine Navy that approached the Uruguayan coast. (Fernando Díaz)

naval base, after having set sail from the Martín García Island Naval Station, transporting three companies of marines to reinforce the naval positions of the revolutionaries. The attack stopped when the aircraft ran out of ammunition and were low on fuel, and they returned to their bases. The Director of the Naval School, Lieutenant Commander Juan Carlos González Llanos was aboard LCIL No. 11 and the vessel was commanded by Lieutenant Federico Rousillon. Both LCILs attacked lacked anti-aircraft guns, so they were unable to return fire. These vessels were approached by the ship LSM No. 1 from the Rio Santiago Base, when they were attacked for the second time. The Meteor 20mm guns caused two deaths and nine wounded.

Meanwhile, in Puerto Belgrano, communications maintained by Lieutenant-Colonel Albrizzi, in command of the local infantry regiment, were intercepted, requesting help from the Azul and Olavarría regiments. Albrizzi, who had declared himself neutral, was intimidated into either bowing or surrendering. At 4:00 p.m., Lieutenant Commander Guillermo Castellanos Solá, commanding a group of marines, occupied the city of Bahía Blanca. A part of the population took to the streets to celebrate and to offer themselves to the service of the rebels. At 4:30 p.m., all surrender deadlines expired, Captain Rial gave the order to bomb the 5th Regiment of Bahía Blanca. As the regiment was outside the city, the civilian population was not affected.

An inverse situation occurred in Río Santiago where every 50 minutes the planes, loaded with ammunition in Morón, attacked the rebel positions. It is worth remembering that the Río Santiago base is located on a small island on the Río de La Plata, separated from the town of Ensenada by a small arm of water. On the mainland there was a shipyard. By land, the 7th Infantry Regiment, together with policemen and militiamen, pressed against the base, but a group of marines under the command of Lieutenant Carlos Büsser, supported by three gunboats on the Santiago River, managed to prevent their penetration. Around 4:30 p.m. an air attack grossly missed its target, bombing behind the front line of infantry, more than 300 metres from the naval base. This caused panic among the civilian population of Ensenada, who began to evacuate themselves.

In Curuzú Cuatiá sabotage by loyal NCOs allowed the fuel tanks to spill: and thus the rebels would have no way of using their armoured vehicles. Meanwhile, in the neighbouring city of Mercedes (Corrientes) the government forces were concentrated. In the afternoon the destroyers that were in the middle of the Río de la Plata approached Montevideo, and a Uruguayan tugboat carried the wounded to the mainland. At one point, the ARA La Rioja lookouts raised the alarm that planes were preparing to attack them, in Uruguayan territorial waters, but in reality, they were North American P-51D Mustang fighters from the Uruguayan Air Force, which gave aerial protection to the Argentine ships that were thought to go into exile in Uruguay.

Although the outskirts of the city of Córdoba were controlled by the rebels, the centre was defended by the governor and the police. After an intense fight, Videla Balaguer (reinforced by Claisse, in command of officers and non-commissioned officers with mortars and machine guns) occupied the City Council. A large number of civilians took arms seized from the police and joined the commandos. The head of the local Radical Youth, Luis Medina Allende, had trained many volunteers in target practice, and they joined the revolution under the command of Videla Balaguer. Before that, the brothers García Montaño, Gustavo Mota Reyna, Gustavo Aliaga, Domingo Castellanos, Marcelo Zapiola, Jorge Manfredi, Jorge Horacio Zinny, and others had joined. These groups had an outstanding performance, for example, the police headquarters surrendered to the command group of Miguel Arrambide Pizarro, which included high school students. That night soldiers from the Infantry School who had been dispersed had some skirmishes with the rebels and left for Alta Gracia, where the loyal forces were consolidating. At midnight, Captain García Favre flew to Puerto Belgrano to exchange news.

On the other hand, the Mendoza and San Juan troops were on manoeuvres in the mountains and the commanders did not have access to a telephone. Andía also assumed that the news of Lagos' presence in San Luis would trigger an intense search and his subsequent arrest by the police, and the best thing was to try to meet Colonel Fernando Elizondo in Mendoza.

With the revolutionary outbreak, a concentration of all the units of the Second Army in San Luis was ordered. The Mendoza CGT provided trucks and fuel to the units present in the province, which were still loyal and would otherwise have taken a week to organise.

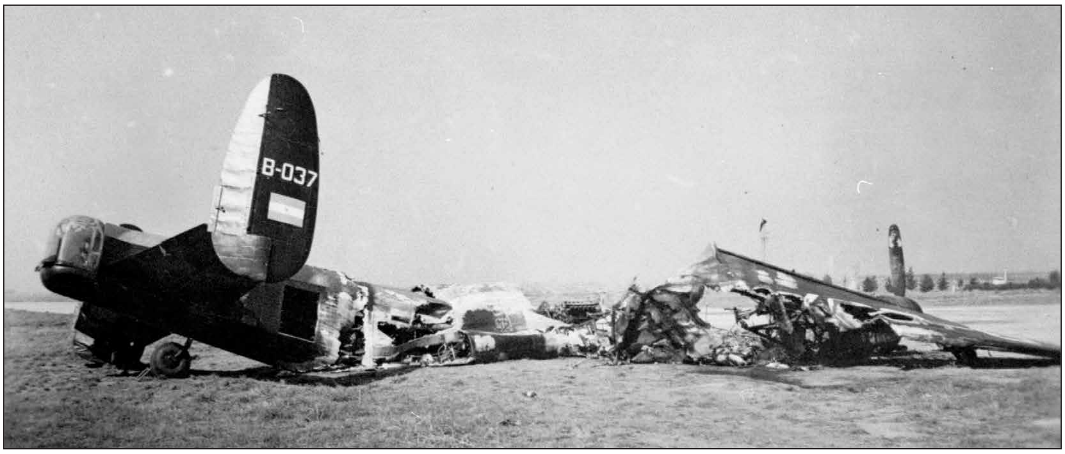
In Curuzú Cuatiá, around 11:00 p.m., the demoralisation of the NCOs in the rebel units reached a peak: they surrounded the loyal officers' in the casino and forced them to leave the city, and, with that the revolution there came to an end.

In Rio Santiago, the rebels withdrew to the island between 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., while the 6th Infantry Regiment approached the city of Eva Perón (today La Plata). The next day a regiment of artillerymen would arrive on the scene, which could easily demolish the base and its occupants. Captain Crexel met with Admiral Cornes and they feasted with champagne, but protected by the darkness of the night, the rebels quietly embarked and advanced towards the Río de la Plata.

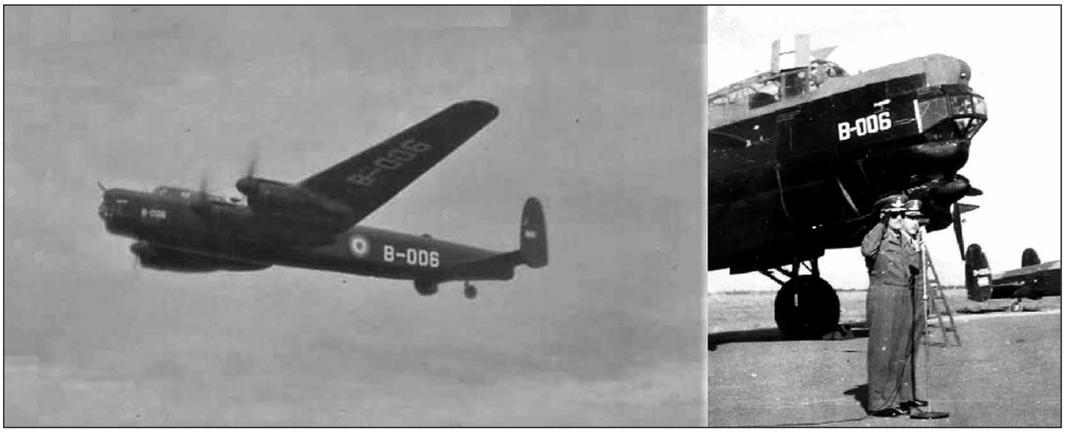
Saturday 17 September

The Rio Cuarto airfield, south of Córdoba, served as the operational base for a section of three government-loyal Meteors, which were being prepared for an attack on Córdoba to destroy the revolutionary Lincolns, but the rebels went ahead when they learned of the mission. A solitary Avro Lincoln, serial number B-006, commanded by Captain Orlando Jesús Cappellini, took off from Corboba bound to Rio Cuarto. It made a low altitude approach to avoid possible anti-aircraft fire and sighted a Meteor at the runway threshold, about to take off. The Lincoln ascended and began dropping its bombs, hitting an Avro Lancaster, serial B-037, completely destroying it. However, the three Meteors, crewed by Catalá, Aubone and Domínguez, then managed to take off and carried out an attack on the Pajas Blancas airport in Córdoba, strafing the Lincolns stationed there and putting two of them out of service. The success of the mission excited Minister Lucero, who ordered a second air attack against Córdoba for the next day, this time with Avro Lincoln bombers. For the rebels this attack meant a significant setback because of the small number of planes they had, and in the afternoon the news came that the Second Army would not march directly to Córdoba. This was a big problem, since the rebels did not have a complete grouping: just an artillery unit with officers and troops. The NCOs were all detained due to lack of confidence they inspired. The numbers of the paratroopers was not enough to form a regiment and the civil commandos, despite their enthusiasm, lacked training. Captain García Favre flew to Mendoza requesting infantry reinforcements. Lonardi evaluated the possibility of establishing an airlift and moving the revolution to Mendoza, but Commodore Julio César Krausse flatly refused to evacuate, stating that they had come there to win or to die, so he did not move either personnel or planes under his command.

An Argentine Air Force Ensign with the typical flight suit of the 1950s, posing with the Gloster Meteor F.Mk.4, serial number I-023. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)



Remains of the Avro Lancaster serial number B-037 that was hit on the ground by bombs dropped by the rebel Avro Lincoln serial number B-006, on 17 September 1955. (Via Vladimiro Cettolo)



The rebel Avro Lincoln serial number B-006 piloted by Captain Orlando Jesús Cappellini which bombed the Rio Cuarto air base destroying Lancaster B-037. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

At 5:00 p.m., the Rebel Command at the Military Aviation School received confusing reports about enlistments of some Gloster Meteor fighters at the Rio Cuarto Regional Workshop. There was no doubt, however, that the objective would be the rebel Lincoln bombers stationed in Córdoba, for which the enlistment of those aircraft was ordered for action.

On the other hand, it was a cloudy day in the city of Buenos Aires. Very early in the morning, an Avro Lincoln took off with the mission of bombing the VII Air Brigade in Morón, but flying over the area, bad weather prevented it from completing the mission, so the bomber went to the Comandante Espora naval air base, where it landed. However, between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m., another rebel Lincoln made a reconnaissance flight in the vicinity of the Military Aviation School and sighted army patrols loyal to the government. The Lincoln returned to its base with at least 10 bullet holes in it. On another reconnaissance flight, this time with a rebel Fiat G.46 advanced trainer, an enemy column of 25 trucks with anti-aircraft guns was identified at Anizacate. The column was advancing towards Alta Gracia, so a Beech AT-11 Kansan took off towards the target, bombarding it with napalm at 7:30 a.m. Later that morning, a rebel Lincoln, commanded by Captain Ricardo Rossi, flew over the previously bombed area and saw that the loyalist column had regrouped and was attacked by it. Rossi's plane was hit by a 40mm projectile in the radar zone, which opened a gap one metre in diameter, but without damaging the bomber's cargo or crew, so the mission was aborted and the aircraft landed safely at the Pajas Blancas airfield. Another Lincoln immediately took off towards that objective and made five passes over the column, completely dispersing it.

During the morning, three Calquín light bombers took off with the mission of bombing a Navy Ocean Tug that was north of Samborombón Bay, heading for Montevideo. The target was not found, and they returned to their base. Later that day, six Calquins took off from Morón bound for Tandil. Three other Calquins arrived in Tandil from Mendoza and later that day, were deployed to Ezeiza. Loyal Gloster Meteors and Avro Lincolns were also deployed to Ezeiza International Airport following a dispersal order, after the loyalists had learned that the Morón base was going to be bombed by the rebel Naval Aviation that day. In fact, a PBY-5A Catalina from Naval Aviation had taken off from the Comandante Espora naval air base with 220 kilogramme bombs to bomb Morón, but the mission could not be carried out due to bad weather, with poor visibility, low cloud and rain over the target. The Catalina, returning to its base, bombing an army column in the vicinity of Tres Arroyos en route.

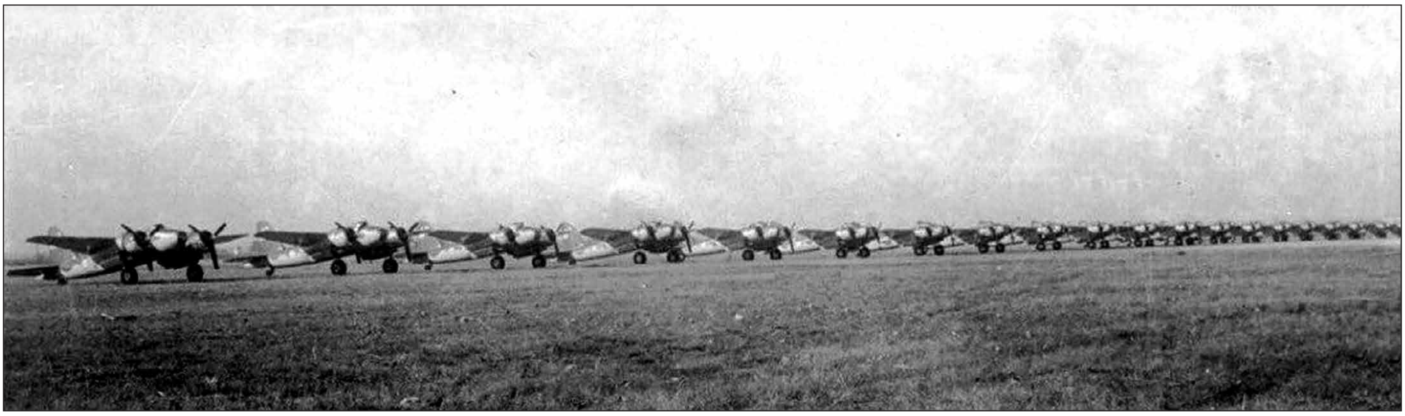
Once the curfew was lifted, the population went out to stock up on food and candles, but nothing disturbed order in the streets. Public shows and football matches had been suspended, and many people were by the radio waiting for news. *La Razón* newspaper informed its readers that afternoon that Curuzú Cuatiá and Río Santiago had been occupied by troops loyal to the government, and the other revolutionary locations were close to falling. When clarifying, the bulk of the Second Army crossed the Desaguadero River that separates the provinces of Mendoza and San Luis. The chief, General Sosa Molina, had moved to Anizacate, Córdoba, preparing for the arrival of his troops. The army's march was led by General Raviolo Audisio, and in San Luis the rebel General, Eugenio Arandía, was waiting for him. After arriving in the Capital of San Luis, the highest ranking officers met in the Commander's office. All the officers present were revolutionaries except for Raviolo himself, and Colonels Botto and Croce, who were arrested on the spot.

The rising of the Second Army was first known in Buenos Aires so General Lucero ordered that the forces of the Province of Buenos Aires heading to Córdoba to concentrate in Río Cuarto to prevent the mountain divisions from reinforcing the rebel position in the Cordovan Capital. In Río Santiago, after the rebels left, Navy Captain Manuel Giménez Figueroa, who had been arrested for not joining the coup, was released. He took command of the base, raised a white flag and negotiated surrender to the 7th Infantry Regiment. In addition to Giménez Figueroa, 19 other junior officers, 176 non-commissioned officers, and 400 men, including sailors and conscripts, remained at the base. About 200 people were left at the Naval Academy. When it was cleared up, planes from the Comandante Espora naval air base returned to bomb the Bahía Blanca Army Garrison, which lacked anti-aircraft defences and soon offered to surrender. Thus, a large quantity of rifles and ammunition was seized. García Favre, having fulfilled his mission, took off again towards Córdoba.

In that city, from the previous night, people loyal to the government had offered sporadic resistance, both in groups and in isolation. The rebels had arranged for everyone, both civilian and military, to identify themselves with a white armband. Groups of civilians led by Air Force cadets had the function of ensuring order in the occupied city. Outside of it, two points were in the revolutionaries' hands: The Pajas Blancas airport and a radio station in the neighbouring town of Ferreyra. Before falling into rebel

CHACABUCO
AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS

The Pajas Blancas airport in Córdoba in the 1950s. An Aerolíneas Argentinas Convair CV-240 can be seen disembarking passengers on the left. An unidentified Douglas DC-3 is on the right. (Diario La Nación)



An impressive line-up of at least 20 I.Aé. 24 Calquín attack/light bombers can be seen in the picture at the IV Air Brigade base in Mendoza in the mid–1950s. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

AEROLÍNEAS ARGENTINAS
AEROLÍNEAS ARGENTINAS

An Aerolíneas Argentinas Douglas DC-3 and a Convair CV-240. Both types were used by the revolutionaries as transport planes during the September coup. (R.A. Scholefield collection/Air Britain)

hands, Ferreyra had been attacked by a rebel Lincoln, damaging the airstrip and several vehicles there. However, the fire from the loyal troops there had damaged the Lincoln's fuel tanks, so it had to return to its base. The station, renamed *La Voz de la Libertad* (The Voice of Liberty), was defended by a machine gun on the roof, capable of sweeping through 360 degrees, with another two on the sides protected by 'fox nests.' It was the target of two unsuccessful attacks.

Meanwhile, the authorities of the IV Air Brigade learned that the troops of the Cuyo Mountain Group, based in Mendoza, were advancing towards Córdoba to provide aid to the government, but they rebelled in San Luis and returned to Mendoza. In these circumstances, the Chief of the IV Air Brigade ordered the technical personnel to disable the Calquín fleet at the base. The damage caused to these aircraft was considerable, such as broken windshields, holes in the flaps, broken instruments or their removal from the cockpit, and broken magnets. The affected Calquins, 18 in total, were serial numbers A-3, A-4, A-11, A-24, A-25, A-27, A-35, A-42, A-50, A-53, A-66, A-68, A-70, A-75, A-91, A-92, A-95 and A-99. While this was taking place, a rebel Calquín appeared over the base, attacking the line of aircraft on the platform in a first pass. During a second attack, a solitary AT-11, commanded by Captain Amauri Domínguez, was about to take off; the rebel Calquín tried to prevent it, but the AT-11 managed to take off and fly very low, escaping from his attacker.

In Anizacate, General Sosa Molina (commander of the Second Army), Colonel Trucco with his Artillery Regiment, and Major Llamosas with the forces from the Infantry School who had escaped from Córdoba met General Morello (who commanded the forces in Alta Gracia). Although Minister Lucero had appointed Sosa as regional commander, after that meeting everything was left to Morello. At 5:00 p.m., the rebel radios of San Luis, Córdoba, Puerto Belgrano, and Walter Viader in Buenos Aires announced the rising of the Second Army and the establishment of a revolutionary government in the province of San Luis.

General Arandía ordered the occupation of Villa Mercedes and the neighbouring town of Villa Reynolds, with its air base. Later, the bulk of the army returned to Mendoza to occupy that province and be able to supply the units with additional fuel and ammunition. Before entering the city, they summoned General Lagos to put him in charge of the troops.

As for the Air Force, initially the rebels in Córdoba did not have any combat aircraft, but on the 17th some existing Gloster Meteor at the Aircraft Factory were refurbished. As the days went by, different planes would arrive, both 'pancakes' from other air bases (an Avro Lincoln arrived that day from Morón and later left for Villa Reynolds, but made an emergency landing, due to a fault, on the way) and some Aerolíneas Argentinas Douglas DC-3 and Convair CV-240 aircraft used as transport. With regard to the bombers, in the Aviation School there were no spare parts or bombs in any quantity, so they went to the Comandante Espora naval base to receive the necessary materiel. Later that day, another Lincoln 'pancaked,' so the rebels now had a total of six bombers at their disposal, under the command of Captain Hunicken.

At dusk on the 17th, most of the V Division, commanded by General Aquiles Moschini, arrived by train in the town of Deán Funes, in the north of the province. The division was composed of four infantry regiments (numbers 15, 17, 18, and 19), one artillery, one cavalry, and a communications battalion. To the east in Río Primero was the 12th Infantry Regiment under the orders of General Miguel Ángel Iñíguez, and to the south, Morello's IV Division would join the forces of Iñíguez and Moschini in a pincer movement to combat Lonardi and Videla.

Argentine Army troops in the mid-1950s. In the upper photograph, the men are all wearing locally made helmets inspired by the German *Stahlhelm M.35*. In the lower photo, several soldiers wearing caps pose next to a Universal Carrier armoured vehicle. (Archivo General de la Nación)

The Southern Command ordered the blowing up of bridges in a radius of 100km and the closing of a hatch on the gas pipeline to cut off the gas supply to Buenos Aires. Against it were approaching the 3rd Cavalry Division, the 2nd Artillery Regiment and the 3rd Infantry Regiment from La Tablada, the latter being the only one in Greater Buenos Aires that was ordered to leave the city. It left in a 47km long column towards the Bahía Blanca area. Its commander, Colonel Carlos Quinteiro, received orders from Buenos Aires from General Francisco Ímaz, Commander of the Army Operations. The regiment had left its anti-aircraft weapons in Buenos Aires, because it was believed that the Comandante Espora aircraft bombs had no fuses – this story later turned out to be fatally false. Having arrived in Tandil, Ímaz ordered them to change course and occupy the navy arsenal in Azul. Azul's regiment, meanwhile, had already left. At the Espora base, two Avro Lincolns and a group of Calquín light bombers under the command of Captain Jorge Costa Peuser were received, but which went over to the rebel side.

A group of radio amateurs from Rio Negro reported that forces loyal to the government were heading to Viedma by train; it was the second group of the Second Army, stationed in San Martín de los Andes, Covunco, Zapala and other places in Neuquén and Río Negro. Consequently, Perren had several bridges blown up over the Colorado River. On the afternoon of that day, a Naval Aviation PBY-5A Catalina, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Justiniano Martínez Achával, took off in good weather from Comandante Espora Base armed with a cluster bomb load and flew over Route 3. The Neuquén Mountain Group, loyal to the government, was approaching Bahía Blanca by train and, faced with various air attacks by Naval Aviation, were forced to stop at the Río Colorado station. The aforementioned Catalina was flying at a very low altitude, then following the railroad tracks and when it sighted the train, it ascended and then, in a descending pass, it released two bombs from the wing supports, which exploded and took both locomotives off the tracks, overturning them. In a second pass, some cluster bombs were dropped by hand from the Catalina's side blisters and the remaining bombs under the wings hit four wagons and as one of them was carrying fuel, a large fireball was produced. This raid completely blocked the advance of this column loyal to the government towards Bahía Blanca.

The Southern Revolutionary Command, under the Command of Captain Rial, then had about 60 aircraft of different types in flying condition, including 2 Martin Mariner and 5 Catalina amphibians (both types could be deployed as bombers), 5 Beechcraft AT-11 light bombers, and about 29 armed N.A. AT-6 advanced trainers, plus 9 armed Grumman J2F Duck observation aircraft and 10 armed Vultee BT-13 trainers, all with a total of 66 pilots.

At 10:30 p.m., a rebel Lincoln took off with the aim of bombing a column of 30 vehicles carrying loyal troops towards Buenos Aires. The column was located in the Pilar area, the attack, caused it to disperse.

Sunday 18 September

In Córdoba early in the morning, General Lonardi organised the defence of his position in three sectors:

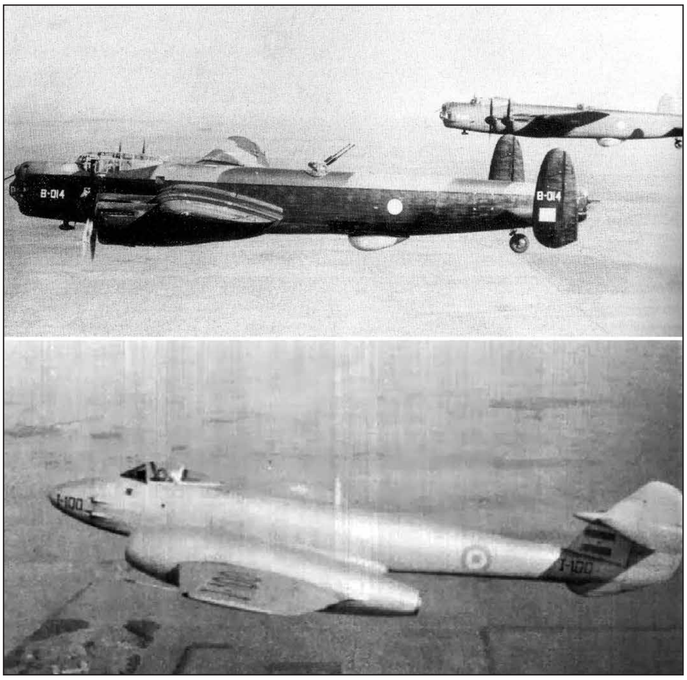
A Naval Aviation Vultee BT-13 Basic Trainer that could be armed for ground attacks. (Aviación Naval Argentina)

Sector A protected the Military Aviation School and the Aircraft Factory, and several anti-aircraft batteries were deployed there.

Sector B defended the Aeronautical NCO School, specially its valuable runway.

Sector C were the forces commanded by General Dalmiro Videla Balaguer in the city itself, in addition to the so-called 'civil commandos,' the cadets and aspirants of the Air Force, and the Paratrooper Company.

A Catholic field mass on Sunday 18 September 1955. The kneeling officers are, from left to right, Commodore Krausse, General Lonardi, Commodore Cesáreo Domínguez and 1st Lieutenant Alemanzor. In the background, revolutionary troops attending the same celebration. (The Revolution of 55. Isidoro Ruiz Moreno)



Two Avro Lincoln bombers in formation. Note the two 20mm cannons on the dorsal turret and the 12.7mm machine guns on the nose and tail turrets (upper). (Juan Carlos Cicalesi). The Gloster Meteor F.Mk.4 , serial number I-100 (lower). (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

Faced with the imminence of a crucial assault by loyal forces far superior to the rebels, General Lonardi ordered the celebration of 'a great field mass, with general confession and communion' in the parade ground of the Aviation School, and after a harangue he ordered the singing the national anthem.

Early in the morning of that day, two Avro Lincoln bombers loyal to the government appeared in the area, flying low. The government did not anticipate that the rebels had interceptors, so the presence of the Gloster Meteors surprised the bomber crews. When the bombers were spotted, they already had their bomb doors open, they climbed up and dropped their bombs on the airfields but they fell near not on, failing to damage the fields or cause casualties among the revolutionaries. A Gloster Meteor commanded by Lieutenant Hellmuth Conrado Weber took off to intercept the bombers. He fired towards them and then sped under the Lincolns, who immediately sought the protection of the clouds to disappear from the area. Lieutenant Weber could not fire again because his guns jammed and he had to return to his base. One of the Lincolns returned and wanted to bomb the runway of the aircraft factory again. Another Meteor, piloted by 1st Lieutenant Rogelio Balado prepared to repel the attack. When he took off, the bombs dropped by the Lincoln began to explode. Balado did not want to shoot his comrades and tried to convince them by radio to join the revolution, but was unsuccessful. The Meteor made several passes within a few metres of the bomber without firing and the Lincoln ended up leaving the area.

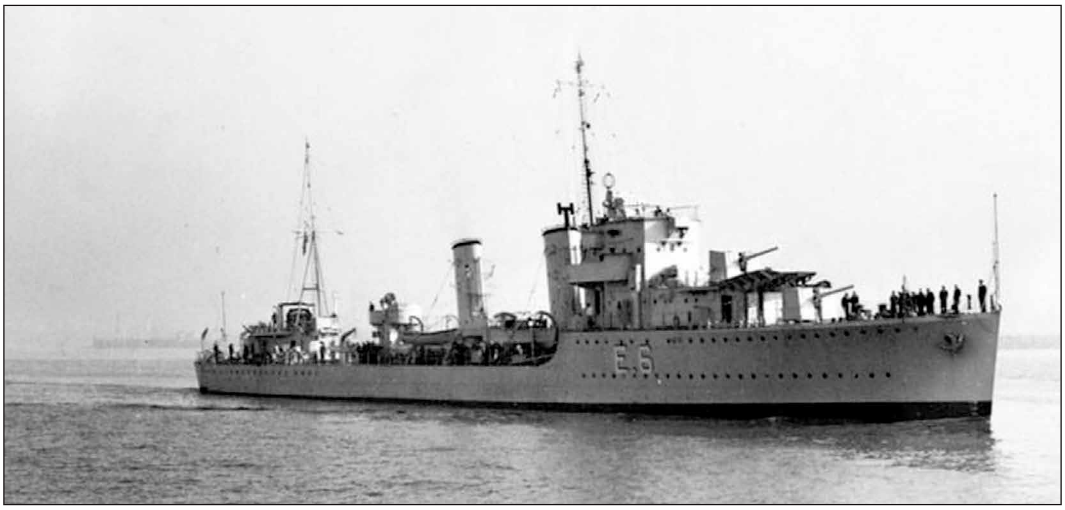
An I.Ae.22 DL piloted by 1st Lieutenant Raúl Adolfo Barcalá, carrying cadet Héctor Destri with a Lewis machine gun, took off from Córdoba for an air patrol mission. While flying over the Monte Cristo area, they discovered the 3rd Group of Anti-Aircraft Artillery, loyal to the government, advancing towards Córdoba, and which attacked the plane, managing to hit its engine, which began to smoke, and also to hit the landing gear forcing the plane to belly-land at its base.

It was evident to the revolutionaries that there would be more air raids and that forces loyal to the government were getting dangerously close to Córdoba. General Lonardi sought reinforcements from other military divisions in the area, and sent Commander García Favre to Mendoza in a Beechcraft AT-11 to meet with General Lagos.

At 7:40 a.m., a squad of seven Naval Aviation J2F Duck and six AT-6 aircraft armed with machine guns and antipersonnel bombs, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Estivariz attacked a column of 30 trucks from the Cavalry Regiment No. 1 loyal to the government, which had left Tandil and was on the road from Sierra de la Ventana to Tornquist. The column was bogged down by the bad conditions of the road. The entire column was bombed in a first pass and then machine-gunned. Another section of three AT-6s, commanded by Lieutenant Juan Vassallo, arrived in the area and also attacked the column. The raid was difficult since the Army column was in very steep terrain, between mountains. The attacks caused several casualties and a great deal of destruction of material, which completely blocked the advance of these troops towards their objective. At 9:20 a.m. a second attack was carried out and at 11:00 a.m., the third, with six AT-6s, causing yet more casualties and yet more destruction. None of the aircraft was shot down although they received many hits from small arms fire.

At 9:17 a.m. that day, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas rejected a dispatch from the Ministry of the Navy that urged him to surrender. At that time, he was in command of a small fleet: the torpedo ship/destroyer ARA *La Rioja*, the patrol boat ARA *Murature,* the minesweepers ARA *Granville,* ARA *Drummond* and ARA *Robinson*, the submarine ARA *Santiago del Estero*, and the workshop ship ARA *Ingeniero Gadda,* as well as other landing craft and torpedo boats. A short time later they could see in the distance the heavy cruisers ARA *La Argentina* and ARA *17 de Octubre* (Later ARA *General Belgrano*), of the sea fleet, which had departed on the 16th from Puerto Madryn in an unclear situation. What was known was the loyally Peronist position of its commander, Vice Admiral Juan C. Basso. Its composition and commanders were: cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre* (Captain Fermín Eleta), cruiser ARA *La Argentina* (Captain Adolfo Videla), torpedo ships/destroyers ARA *Buenos Aires* (Commander Eladio Vásquez), ARA *Entre Ríos* (Commander Aldo Abelardo Pantín), ARA *San Juan* (Commander Benigno Varela) and ARA *San Luis* (Commander Pedro Arhancet), frigates ARA *Hercules* (Commander. Mario Pensotti), ARA *Sarandí* (Commander Laertes Santucci) and ARA *Heroína* (Commander César Goria), workshop ship ARA *Ingeniero Iribas* (Commander Jorge Mezzadra) and rescue ship ARA *Charrúa* (Lieutenant Commander Marco Bence). Almost

The heavy cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre* (later ARA *Belgrano*). (Esteban Raczynski collection)



The torpedo ship/destroyer ARA *Buenos Aires.* (Histarmar Archives)

The frigate ARA *Hercules*. (Histarmar Archives)

all the ship commanders were involved in the conspiracy, except the ship captains. The Commander-in-Chief was Vice Admiral Basso; the commander of the Cruiser Force was Rear Admiral Néstor Gabrielli, the Destroyer Squadron was commanded by Captain Raimundo Palau and the Frigate Division by Captain Agustín Lariño. The latter was the highest ranking among the conspirators.

The first communication received by the fleet, at 08:22 the day before, reported on 'major uprisings' and in the reply the situation was made clear: it was loyal. In the afternoon the rebel naval officers of the heavy cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre* arrested Vice Admiral Basso, and thus left Lariño in command of the revolutionary fleet. Rear Admiral Néstor Gabrielli and Captains Elsegood, Eleta and Palau were also arrested. The two heavy cruisers of the fleet went towards the Río de la Plata at their maximum speed of 25 knots. The rest of the fleet, which could not travel that fast, would pass through Puerto Belgrano to stock up, drop-off the detained officers and release the 85 crew members who had voluntarily decided not to join the rebellion. Arriving at the Plata on the morning of 18 September, the heavy cruiser ARA *La Argentina* honoured the patrol boat ARA *Murature* with a 17 gun salute and submitted to its new commander, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas. At the same time, in the Ministry of War, the Repression Command had reports of the rebel position of the fleet, but in Mar del Plata it had not been seen passing. In Command there were three naval officers as liaison officers: Commanders Jorge Boffi, Enrique Green and Juan García. The rest of the command was unaware that these officers were part of the revolutionary plot who had agreed to supply false reports and sabotage the orders issued through them.

Given the news that an armoured column was travelling to Puerto Belgrano via Mar del Plata, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas' staff guessed that they would refuel in the *YPF* (*Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales*, Fiscal Oilfields, the Argentine petroleum company) tanks in that city. The heavy cruiser ARA *9 de Julio* and four torpedo ships/destroyers were sent to bombard the oil deposits of Mar del Plata, giving prior notice to the population. At 6:00 p.m. that day, the destroyers ARA *Entre Ríos* and ARA *San Luís* entered Puerto Belgrano, and four hours later the ARA *San Juan* and ARA *Buenos Aires* did the same, to be refuelled and restocked with ammunition, torpedoes and depth charges and food. In addition, the submarine ARA *Santiago del Estero* and the workshop ship ARA *Ingeniero Gadda* also revolted and sailed to the fleet to join the Rear Admiral Rojas' group.

Around the same time, Plumerillo Airport became the third revolutionary air base, bringing 12 Calquín light bombers. Lieutenant-Colonel Mario A. Fonseca was sent to San Juan to take over the government of the province. At noon, Lagos received García Favre who brought a desperate request for reinforcements. Lagos said that he could not send reinforcements to Córdoba because it would weaken his own position in Mendoza.

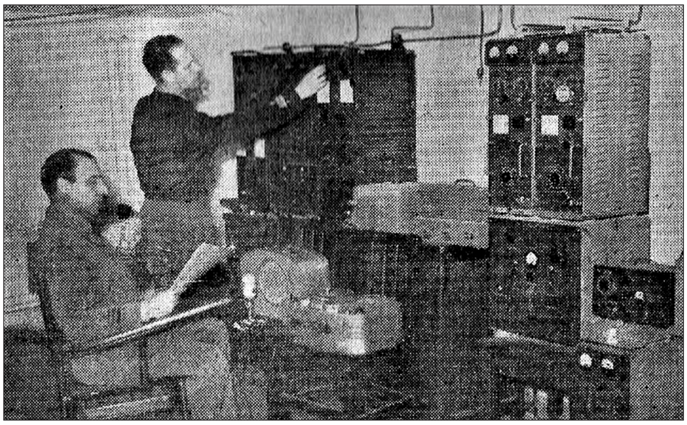
Meanwhile, all Calquín bombers stationed in Ezeiza returned to Morón. That day, six of these bombers carried out a mission to support the loyal troops that were marching against Puerto Belgrano. On the return leg, two of them landed in Tandil, which had fallen into rebel hands, and the crew members were promptly arrested. The crews of the other four Calquín aircraft decided to join the revolutionaries, landing at the Comandante Espora naval air base. These aircraft were then in charge of the Navy Captain Arturo Rial and in the afternoon of that day his crews were ordered to attack a motorised column of the Cavalry Regiment No. 1, near the town of Tornquist, in Buenos Aires Province, an attack that was carried out with great precision. During that day, some Naval Aviation *Canso* aircraft carried out several bombing raids against loyal army armoured columns in the area of Bahía Blanca, causing many casualties. In one of those missions, at 8:50 a.m., the target was the effectives of the 4th Artillery Regiment near the town of Tres Arroyos, in Buenos Aires Province. An hour later, a loyal army column of around 50 vehicles, near the town of Sierra de la Ventana, was the target, and at 11:25 a.m., some Canso and a Calquín light bombers attacked a train near the town of Río Colorado, in the Province of Río Negro. On that occasion, the Consolidated Model 28-5AMC Catalina IIA serial number 0275/2-P-7 was hit by a number of bullets and as a consequence, its propellers had to be changed. The last action of the day was a raid against a train carrying loyal troops near the town of Las Oscuras, in the Province of Buenos Aires. During the 18th, a total of 264 sorties were carried out by Naval Aviation with the Canso A/Catalina IIA flying boats serial numbers 0262/2-P-4, 0263/2-P-5, 0275/2-P-7, 0276/2-P-8, 0280/2-P-10 and 0291/2-P-11. There was a plan to bomb some loyal targets in the Federal Capital on the following day, but this mission was not carried out.

The same day, the Calquins also carried out operations in Córdoba. Two of them were in that city under overhaul at the FMA and were incorporated into the Revolutionary Air Force. Loyal troops under the command of General Miguel Ángel Iñíguez were at the railway station in the Alta Córdoba neighbourhood, so a Calquín was prepared for a raid. Instead of carrying the traditional four 50-kilo bombs, a huge drum of napalm was placed in its bomb bay. The aforementioned train station was attacked by the light bomber and several wagons were hit, and consumed by fire.

Motorised Infantry Regiment No. 3 arrived at General La Madrid around noon and Lieutenant-Colonel Arrechea received the order to abandon their vehicles and continue by train. Arrechea thought that this order was unacceptable, since after arriving and disembarking from the train, the regiment would no longer be motorised. He then decided to establish a telephone communication between General Ímaz and the commander of the regiment, Colonel Carlos Quinteiro, who refused to carry out the order. Due to the large size of this column, at Espora Naval Base it was decided to harass it for the rest of the day with the Naval Aviation armed North American AT-6 Texans, which destroyed at least 50 percent of the ground vehicles there.

Rear Admiral Isaac F. Rojas. In 1945 he was appointed Chief of the First Navy Division. He was commander of the minesweepers ARA *Thorne* and ARA *Bouchard* and commander of the artillery of the cruiser ARA *Almirante Brown.* He was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1952 and commanded the heavy cruisers ARA *Pueyrredon* and ARA *9 de Julio*. That year he was appointed commander of the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base and was also Director of the Naval Military School in Rio Santiago. In September 1955, he assumed command of the Revolutionary Navy. (Public Domain)

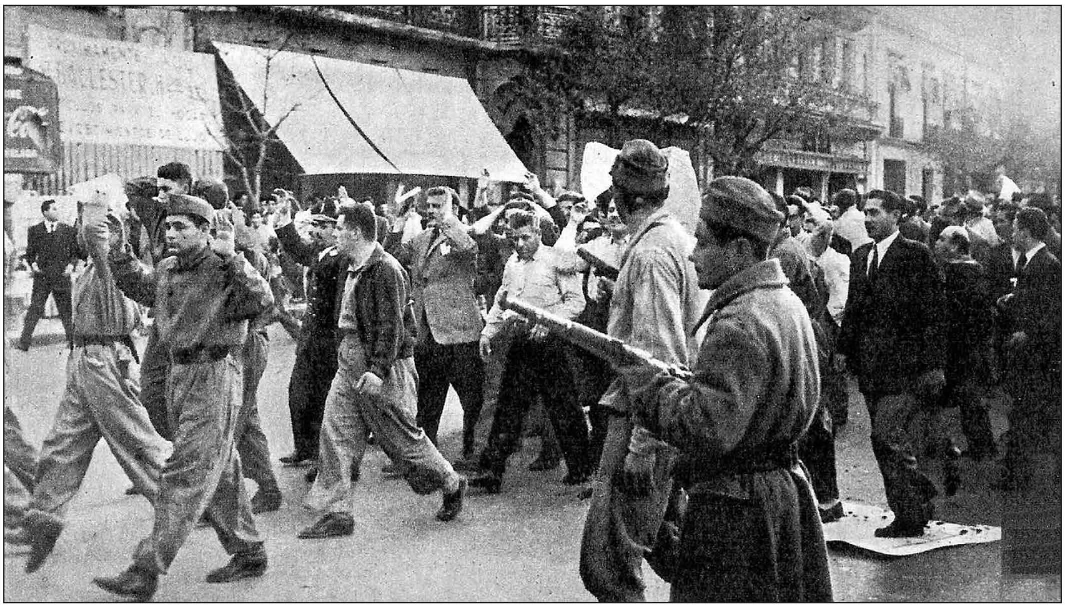
A train car destroyed by bombs dropped by revolutionary Calquín light bombers. (Public Domain)


Communications Centre of the Argentine Navy in Puerto Belgrano. (Argentine Navy)

Despite the bombings, that night forces loyal to the government had surrounded the area of Bahía Blanca. Captain Arturo Rial considered the option of sailing to Río Gallegos, foreseeing a prolonged civil war where the rebels could occupy Patagonia and its energy sources. In the afternoon, Rial and Lonardi communicated by radio and resolved that each would resist and not surrender.

Revolutionary military personnel with some civil commandos at the Military Aviation School in Córdoba in September 1955. (Jorge R. Schneider)

Revolutionary troops operating a Colt 7.65mm heavy machine gun inside a house in Córdoba (left). Revolutionary military personnel and civilians with rifles and light machine guns in an office of the Córdoba town hall (right). (Jorge R. Schneider)



Revolutionary troops escorting civilian and military Peronist prisoners in the city of Córdoba. (Jorge R. Schneider)

General Iñíguez's brigade arrived in Córdoba from the west from Río Primero. After him came Lieutenant-Colonel Podestá and General Sosa Molina. General Alberto Morello advanced from Anisacate. Meanwhile, V Division had reached Deán Funes by train, but could not get the necessary number of vehicles to continue its advance. Additionally, they had been ordered not to enter the town of Jesús María because it was believed that the local Military Lyceum had rebelled and if that were the case most of the defenders would have been underage students. This belief proved false, and at 8:30 p.m. the troops began the advance.

Iñíguez, on the other hand, arrived from the west advancing towards Alta Córdoba. Sporadically civilian snipers opened fire on them. At the railway station, action by the commandos forced them to abandon their vehicles.

By 9:30, the station had been occupied by the Argentine Army. The rebels, called guerrillas or insurgents by their adversaries, took up positions in the *Savoy* and *Castelar* hotels that were opposite, and on neighbouring rooftops. Intense gunfire raged across the street until a Calquín attack plane, serial number A-70, piloted by 1st Lieutenant Raúl Barcalá and which had been sent by Commodore Krausse, dropped four napalm bombs on a train, its pilot believing it to be packed with loyal soldiers. Three of the bombs hit empty cars, raising a large fireball and the fourth pierced the roof and landed on a platform, but without exploding. Iñíguez decided to stay in position while he waited for the rest of his troops arriving in the city. At 3:30 p.m. the fighting resumed, and the loyal troops already had mortars and machine guns.

The troops loyal to the government advancing on Córdoba were from the Fifth Division of the Army based in Deán Funes, the 14th Infantry Regiment with its artillery group from Rio Cuarto, the 11th Infantry Regiment from Rosario and the 12th Infantry Regiment with a section of anti-aircraft artillery from Santa Fé. The rebel city of Córdoba would soon be completely surrounded by loyal forces.

Meanwhile, at 10:00 a.m., a naval reconnaissance AT-6 located six Sherman tanks, several carriers and six armoured units being disembarked from a train at the railway junction in Saavedra. The plane dropped a couple of bombs that destroyed the locomotive and a wagon, but the tanks and carriers were not damaged. The alarm was raised at the Comandante Espora Base and an air attack was organised against the armoured column. An AT-6 squadron was prepared under the command of Lieutenant Juan Cidoti and another of Grumman Ducks commanded by Lieutenant Commander Estivariz. All the aircraft were armed with machine guns and carried 50-kilo bombs. The Government armoured column was bombed and machine-gunned, but this time anti-aircraft fire managed to hit and seriously damage two Grumman Ducks. That piloted by Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Estivariz, with Lieutenant Miguel Irigoin and 2nd Corporal Juan Rodríguez as crew members, received hits on the engine and crashed, emitting black smoke, without its crew members being able to bail out. The other Duck was hit on the engine, which stopped suddenly, but its pilot was able to glide to a cultivated field about four kilometres away, where it made an emergency landing. There, the crew was helped by the rancher and were later able to reach Espora.

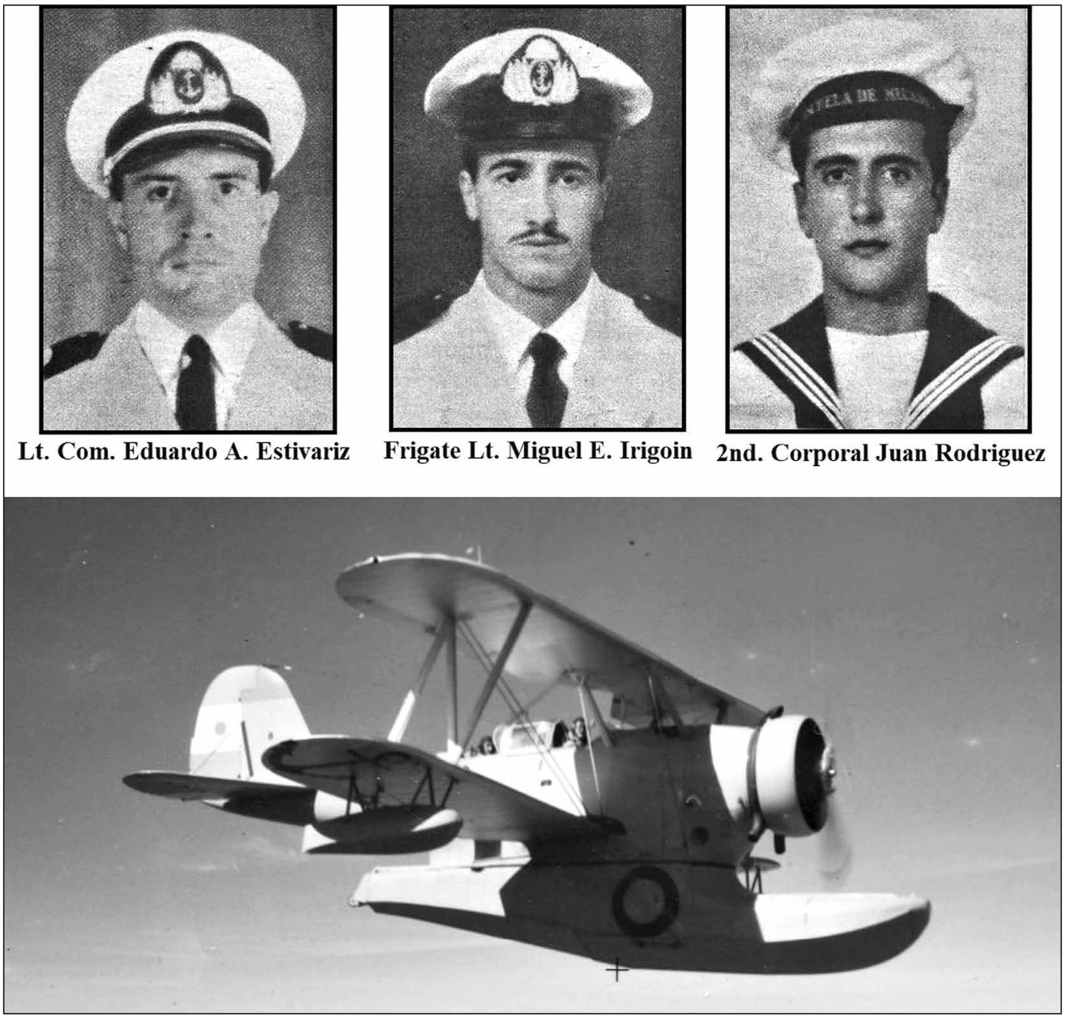
In the Federal Capital, the occupation of the Alta Córdoba station was advertised as the occupation of the entire city, pending a 'cleaning up operation in the mountains and forests.'

The Repression Command announced that the cleaning up operations in Córdoba would take place that day and perhaps part of following day, because of the peculiarity of the topography of the city.

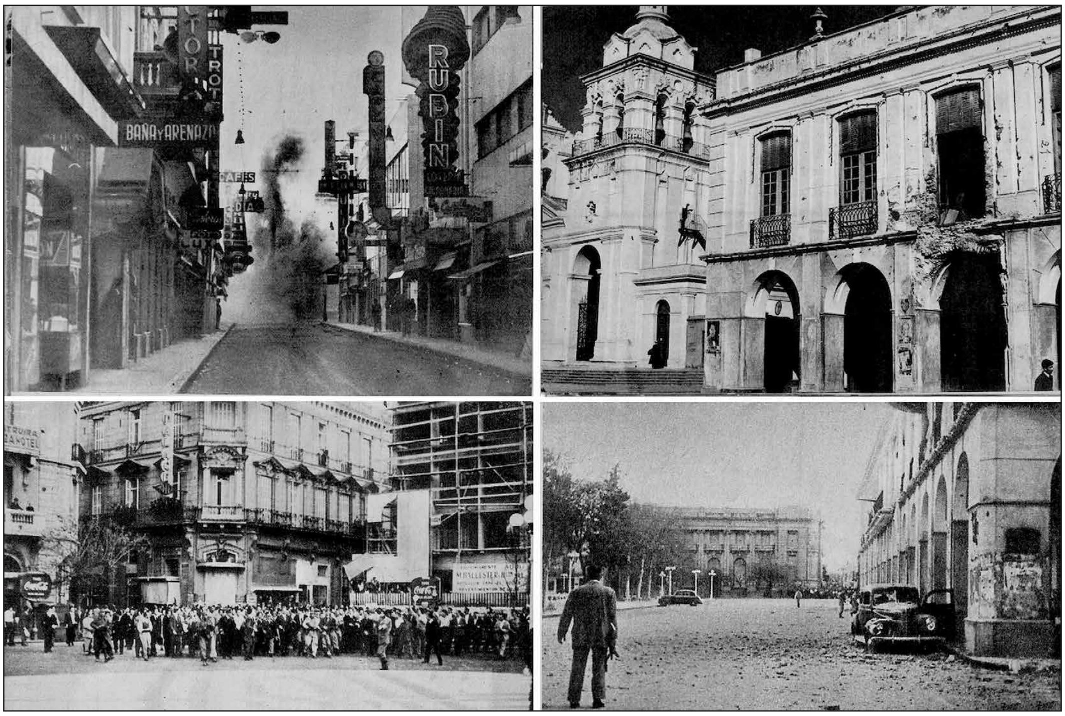
General Arnoldo Sosa Molina – brother of Operations Commander José María Sosa Molina – was sent from Buenos Aires to meet General Morello in order to receive orders and collect information on the state of the forces that were deployed in Alta Gracia. These troops advanced on Córdoba towards the Aviation School, but the road was slightly higher than the surrounding plain and the rebel artillery fired on them forcing them to retreat. This did not have as great a material impact as a psychological impact.

Meanwhile, in Alta Córdoba, the context of street fighting made defence and attack take on unusual characteristics; there were no traditional lines, and the different platoons were poorly coordinated. Advances or setbacks were sudden and oscillating. Military Aviation School Cadets with Air Force soldiers participated in combat in the Alta Córdoba area against loyal troops, managing to capture the Pajas Blancas airport.

Lonardi ordered Videla Balaguer to withdraw from the urban area of Córdoba to


Lt. Com. Eduardo A. Estivariz
Frigate Lt. Miguel E. Irigoin
2nd. Corporal Juan Rodriguez

The crew of the Naval Aviation Grumman Duck that was shot down by an Army armoured column of government loyalists on 18 September 1955. All three members of this crew perished when their aircraft crashed. (*Argentine Naval Aviation*)



Heavy fighting in downtown Córdoba in September 1955. Clockwise, the City Council building receiving a direct artillery hit, the facade of the City Council with damage caused by artillery, an armed revolutionary militiaman in the area of the City Council building and civilians and revolutionary soldiers, led by General Dalmiro Videla Balaguer, advancing towards the Cabildo. (Jorge R. Schneider)

An Argentine Army Sherman IVC Firefly tank with QF 17-pdr 76.2mm gun. (Argentine Army)

establish a single focus of resistance, but Videla refused for two reasons: firstly, that the fall of the city would have a devastating impact on the morale of the troops; and secondly, that he had taken an oath to fight to triumph or die without backing down. During the afternoon Lonardi issued a radiogram to Admiral Rojas: 'Córdoba calls for urgent effective action on Buenos Aires.'

At dusk, there was a pause in the fighting. Iñíguez received the order from Morello to take over the Cabildo, but he did not follow it to avoid a street fight in the dark. Sosa Molina later approved of Iñíguez's decision. Morello fell back to Alta Gracia, because he correctly foresaw that during the night the rebel artillery would attack his position with a heavy bombardment. In Alta Gracia, the constitutional governor, Raúl Luchini, had gathered more than 100 police with whom he intended to enter the city when it was taken by loyal troops.

During the day, several Sherman tanks had been dispatched by rail to Río Cuarto and Villa María; the Third Infantry Company, from the Campo de Mayo NCO School, would be deployed in Las Higueras the next day. The order was for all loyal troops to attack at dawn on the 19th.

In Mendoza, the popular reception that the army had, the meek attitude of Governor Carlos Horacio Evans when he handed over power, and the fact that the CGT attacked the soldiers, caused a large part of the troops to begin to sympathise with the rebel side. General Lagos' position was consolidated when powerful artillery pieces purchased from the United States by the Chilean government were found in a wagon in transit to the neighbouring republic and seized. On the morning of the 19th, Captain García Favre met Lagos for the second time and proposed that he establish a belligerent territory with a provisional revolutionary government, thus generating a 'serious international complication' for President Perón. Lagos abandoned that idea to avoid damaging the revolution and also because he thought that General Lonardi was the one who had more right to assume the provisional government than him. Lagos then agreed to send an infantry battalion reinforced with an artillery battalion from Villa Reynolds in San Luis to support Córdoba's effort, attacking the Rio Cuarto air base in Las Higueras, so as to make the loyalist Meteor fighters operations from there impossible.

At the same time, in Mendoza the Second Army, which was formed from different units that had been summoned to quell the revolutionary movement in Córdoba, upon reaching the city of San Luis on the 17th, joined the revolutionary movement, immediately deciding to return to their bases. On the 18th, the head of the IV Air Brigade, who remained loyal to the government, decided to send a Calquín with two pilot officers to verify the advance of the troops; it was found that they were returning to their bases. Hours later, Calquín serial A-20 was dispatched to recheck the situation of the aforementioned troops and received small arms fire from them. Due to this, it was decided in the afternoon to hand over IV Air Brigade to the rebel troops from the Army, all of the Brigade's members were invited to join the revolution. Most accepted, but not the Chief of the Brigade, several officers and 27 NCOs, who were detained. From that moment on, intensive work was done repairing all the Calquín light bombers that had been damaged. With the headquarters of the IV Air Brigade, there were already three air bases in the hands of the revolutionaries, plus that of Villa Reynolds and the one in Tandil.

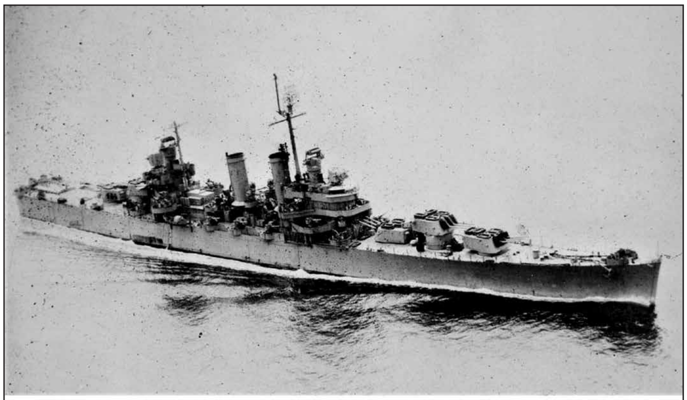
Between the 16th and 18th, the following loyal Gloster Meteors F.4 and crews took part in several missions: Serial I-045, flown alternatively by the Vice Commodore Carlos Sister, Captains Ernesto López and Jorge Quagliardi, serial I-090 flown by 1st Lieutenant Desiderio Biró, serials I-022, I-044, I-063 and I-069, flown by Captain Ernesto López in different flights, serial I-003 flown by 1st Lieutenant Van Thienen, serials I-032 and I-069 flown by Lieutenant Mario Olezza in different flights, and serial I-075 flown by 1st Lieutenant Rosito, all of these flights were on 16 September. On the 17th, serial I-025 flown by Lieutenant Mario Olezza, and the 18th, serials I-025 and I-074 flown by the same officer, and serial I-075 flown by 1st Lieutenant Van Thienen, who got lost and had to perform an emergency landing near Salto, in Buenos Aires Province, but managed to do so without damaging the jet.

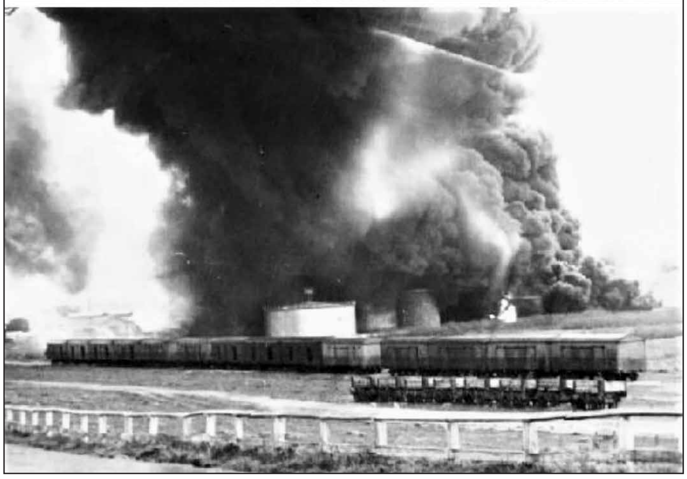
Late in the evening of Sunday 18th, a number of Army units loyal to the government were surrounding the two naval bases near Bahía Blanca and were waiting for dawn on the 19th to attack. They were all within 100 kilometres of the rebel positions. In the town of Sierra de la Ventana was Artillery Regiment No. 2 and batteries of the School of Anti-Aircraft Artillery, in Tornquist were the 13th Cavalry Regiment, the 3rd Artillery Regiment, including communications, sappers and armoured detachments. Between the two mentioned locations, were troops from the Cavalry Regiments No. 1 and 2. In Pringles, the Motorised Infantry Regiment No. 3 and in Río Colorado, the Neuquén Mountain Army Group. It was estimated that 6,000 to 7,000 troops were part of this force, with artillery and tanks, but without close air support. The revolutionary forces, on the other hand, comprised about 1,000 marines, 500 apprentices from the Navy Mechanics School and around 1,000 seamen, with some 60 aircraft and a few pieces of anti-aircraft artillery.

Monday 19 September

In the early hours of the morning of 19th, six warships anchored off Mar del Plata. Through the Police, the *Prefectura Naval* (the Coast Guard) and various military detachments, the Navy reported that it would proceed to bombard targets in the city. At 6:10 a.m. on the same day, the combat alert was issued on the heavy cruiser ARA *9 de Julio*.

When the *9 de Julio* headed for the coast, it received a call from one of Navy's Martin Mariners, requesting permission to bomb the same target. This aircraft had been sent to bomb the Dock Sud in Buenos Aires, but bad weather prevented it from reaching the target and it was returning back to Puerto Belgrano. Authorisation was granted and the Mariner unloaded its bombs near the fuel tanks but without causing major damage, although the action served as a warning for the population to evacuate the area. At 7:14 a.m. the gun fire against the Mar del Plata fuel tanks began, the attack ending at 7:23. 63 of the 68 projectiles fired fell within the target area: a 200-metre by 75-metre rectangle owned by YPF. The other five hit no more than 200 metres from that area. Nine out of eleven fuel tanks were destroyed, just two of them survived. There were no civilian casualties thanks to the tanks being at a distance from the inhabited area. Then Army positions were attacked, which were mostly abandoned by their occupants, and later weapons were handed over to civilians and police who supported the rebels in order to take control of the city. After that show of force, the Navy issued an ultimatum:



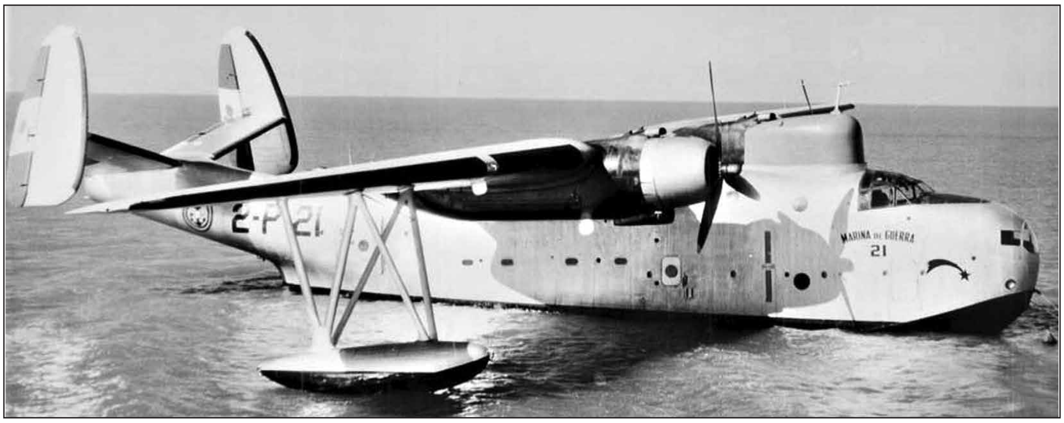


The heavy cruiser C-5 ARA *9 de Julio* of the Argentine Navy, which fired at the YPF fuel tanks in Mar del Plata (top). (Histarmar Archives). Several YPF tanks burning after the naval bombardment (bottom). (Public domain)

> If Perón did not resign, the city of Buenos Aires and the Ensenada oil distillery in La Plata would be bombed.

At the same time, the heavy cruiser *ARA 17 de Octubre* was approaching La Plata to attack the Dock Sud distillery. At 9:00 a.m. the local radio stations were informed so that they should give notice to the population, but they did not do so because that would imply admitting that the military situation was not completely under control of the government.

The same day, the Rebel Command ordered a bombing mission over the Rio Cuarto Workshop and the 5th Air Brigade. The Lincoln designated for this mission was B-028. During the flight, the Lincoln suffered a series of technical failures that caused it to crash. Another version indicates that there was a fight between the crew members who did not agree with the assigned mission and in the



Martin PBM-5 Mariner, serial number 2-P-21 of the 2nd Naval Air Squadron ofthe Argentine Naval Aviation. (Histarmar Archives)

Avro Lincoln heavy bomber serial number B-028 of the Argentine Air Force. Carrying out a mission of the Government's Repression Command, it crashed in Sierra de Achiras, Piedras Blancas, Córdoba on 19 September 1955, with 11 fatalities. (Argentina Air Force)

Calquín light bombers warming up engines for a mission. (*Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina*)

attempt to prevent it, there had been an armed confrontation on board, all indicated by the detailed analysis that was carried out on the remains of the bomber and its 11 ill-fated crew members, all of whom died.

At 6:40 a.m., because of the imminence of an air attack on the Military Aviation School, all the aircraft parked there were ordered to take off. They were to remain in the air awaiting further orders. The government command had sent Lincoln bombers for this mission from Villa Reynolds, fully laden with bombs. The idea was to destroy as many rebel aircraft as possible on the ground, but in the end the mission was aborted.

Orders were received from the Revolutionary Command to attack a motorised column that was approaching the Bahía Blanca area, and also the verification of the uprising at the Tandil air base, with the use of four Calquín light bombers. The Tandil uprising was confirmed in the first place and when the column was located near Bahía Blanca, it gave indications of surrender, so the Calquín landed at the Comandante Espora naval base. The military operations near Puerto Belgrano carried out by Naval personnel with close air support secured the surrender of two loyal Army Generals, E. Molinuevo of the Third Cavalry Division and Jorge Boucherie of the Sixth Mountain Infantry Division, and their entire commands.

Perón had not spoken in public since the revolutionary outbreak. He had hoped to control the situation in a few hours, or at most a couple of days, but any resolution was delayed and his mood began to decline. According to General Raúl Tassi that day, 19 September, President General Perón was in the basement of the Ministry extremely nervous and his depression was evident; when he learned of the uprising of the Army's Cuyo Mountain Group he was more than nervous, he was afraid and completely dejected. Major Ignacio Cialcetta, Perón's aide and a relative, noticed that the President did not want to get involved in anything, leaving all the decisions in the hands of General Lucero. He mentioned though that he was very disappointed by his collaborators.

In the Repression Command it was decided to summon the reserve soldiers of classes 31, 32 and 33, estimating this reinforcement at about 18,000 men. However, the decree was not carried out after the evacuation of the Ministry of War, driven by the approach of the sea fleet to Buenos Aires.

That morning the leaders of the 3rd Infantry Regiment, Quinteiro and Arrechea, ran into the 1st Cavalry Regiment in Sierra de la Ventana, which was withdrawing from the area of operations due to the air superiority of the Naval Aviation, the destruction of the roads and the difficulty of approaching the objective by that route. Regiment 3 finally met with General Molinuevo, of the III Cavalry Division. Only Regiments 3 and 2 of artillery, commanded by Colonel Martín Garro, had arrived. They were unaware of the general situation in the country because the telephone lines were cut and they had no contact with Buenos Aires, but even with the few concentrated forces, they decided to attack Puerto Belgrano.

In Córdoba, the fighting had stopped during the night; at 7 in the morning General Aquiles Moschini, who commanded V Army Division, deployed 15th Infantry Regiment with two sections of guns to seize the Pajas Blancas airport. The capture of this aerodrome would allow the loyalists to use the radio beacon to interfere with the transmissions of the LV2 radio station *La Voz de la Libertad.* For his part, the head of the Revolutionary Air Force, anticipated the manoeuvre and ordered the destruction of the radio beacon before the loyal troops could seize the airport. The Calquín light bomber serial A-34 was used for this purpose, and it dropped a bomb destroying the target. Despite the air raids of the revolutionaries, bombing the troops advancing on the area from Beechcraft AT-11 aircraft ordered by Commodore Krausse, the airport was finally occupied at 9:30 a.m.

General Iñíguez resumed the fight in the Alta Córdoba station. The airport was occupied at 9:30 a.m., and then General Moschini went to the Military Aviation School where the Revolutionary Command was located. From Alta Gracia, General Alberto Morello did not advance because of the aerial harassment and the artillery fire that he had received the day before, and he waited for an opportunity to advance cautiously. The street fighting continued all morning; the loyal troops pressed in their advance trying to find a point to cross the Primero River and reach the centre of the city of Córdoba. At noon, the first elements of the 11th Infantry Regiment arrived, joining the 12th Regiment, led by Iñíguez. The plan was to bombard the Centenario Bridge and open fire from the 12th Regiment, while the 11th turned around and crossed the river through the Abasto. Meanwhile, forces arriving by train from Buenos Aires were concentrating in Río Cuarto. According to del Carril, those forces could choose to pulverise first Lonardi and then Lagos, in successive stages, or they could divide into two sectors, and pulverise Lonardi and Lagos simultaneously, this at their own choice, such was the superiority of their elements of war. However, despite the size of these units, the troops for the most part refused to attack the rebels. After the revolution the guns were still in store and the tanks brought from Buenos Aires had not even been disembarked from the trains.

At 3:15 p.m., Meteor serial I-079 crewed by Lieutenant Alberto Morandini took off from the FMA runway in Córdoba in order to attack a column of loyal army troops. When returning from this mission 20 minutes later, it suffered a fire in the right turbine due to the use of an inappropriate type of fuel, which caused the engines to overheat. During the approach to its base, the *Meteor* crashed about six kilometres northeast of the runway, killing the pilot.

At the Comandante Espora naval air base, several planes set out at dawn to explore the area. They expected to find the enemy 30 to 50 kilometres away, anticipating that they would have advanced during the night. Instead, they found that almost no unit had advanced, and at the slightest harassment the soldiers abandoned their vehicles and fled without resisting. Civil patrols reported that troop morale was extremely low. It should be remembered that their anti-aircraft weapons had remained in Buenos Aires, because at the beginning of the operation it was believed that the rebels would not have fuses to detonate their bombs. The Neuquén Mountain Group had received a train with supplies and eight fuel tankers, which were bombed and destroyed that morning.

The moral erosion that Lonardi had speculated with when planning the revolution had begun to take effect. In Neuquén, Captain Lino Montiel Forzano brought together an officer and two non-commissioned officers in his trust and managed to apprise the personnel of the Mountain Group's Maintenance Workshop. Montiel Forzano organised several platoons of civilians, occupied a radio station, obtained the support of the Neuquén police and took control of the local airfield.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, 200 soldiers left Mendoza on Aerolíneas Argentinas planes bound for Córdoba. Fresh infantry troops were a prized reinforcement.

The Resignation of Perón

President Perón had shown up at the Army Ministry very early in the morning of that day. Together with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army General José Domingo Molina and the Chief of General Staff General Carlos Wirth, the military situation was analysed and both were very optimistic about achieving a speedy victory. Also present was General Lucero, who stressed that the forces loyal to the government had the only two rebel bases, Córdoba and Bahía Blanca, surrounded. Despite this analysis and due to the threats of the Navy and seeing that he did not have the necessary support from the Army to defeat the rebels, Perón decided to offer his resignation and leave the country. He issued a final statement addressed to the people and the Army, which was published by the press the following day, stating that the Army would take over the government, 'to seek the pacification of the Argentines before it was too late.'

For Perón's close allies, and despite having been informed of the favourable military situation, it was a bitter surprise and disappointment that the President first resigned, calling for a ceasefire to put the government in the hands of a loyal group of generals, and then took refuge in the Paraguayan Embassy. At that time, the war fleet of the Argentine Navy was blocking Buenos Aires, General Aramburu had raised the troops in Curuzú Cuatiá and General Lagos had done the same in Cuyo, while General Videla Balaguer had led the civilian commandos in Córdoba. What Perón feared most was that the coup would turn into a long civil war that would produce thousands of victims. In fact, the number of dead and injured people was increasing, as well as an increased destruction of state assets.

The well-known photograph of President Perón hugging his Minister of War, General Franklin Lucero. Perón blindly trusted his minister who did remain loyal to the end. (Public Domain)

A few hours later, Perón handed Lucero a handwritten note:

> To the Army and the People of the Nation: … Several days ago I tried to get away from the government if it was a solution to the current political problems. Known public circumstances prevented me from doing so … I think that a dispassionate and fair intervention is necessary to face the problem and solve it. I do not believe that there is a man in the country with enough prestige to achieve it, which prompts me to think that an institution that has been, is and will be a guarantee of honesty and patriotism: The Army. The Army can take charge of the situation, of order, of the government. … If my fighting spirit drives me to fight, my patriotism and my love for the people induce me to all personal renunciation.

Perón's letter, nevertheless, was not a clear-cut resignation and because of that more problems would be raised, not only for the rebels but also to the Military Junta of senior generals that was formed to conduct the negotiations for a ceasefire. That Junta was composed of 17 Army Major-Generals but Army Brigadier Generals, Air Force and Navy observers also attended the sessions with the right to speak but not to vote. The Junta was presided over by Lieutenant-General José D. Molina, the Army Commander-in-Chief, but because of Molina's close identification with Perón, Lieutenant-General Emilio Forcher emerged as the dominant figure.

At 12:52 p.m., the State Radio issued a statement inviting the rebel leaders to accept a truce and go to the Ministry of War to talk. Later Lucero read Perón's resignation letter, gave his own resignation from the ministry, and also announced the creation of a Military Junta to take over the government. In Córdoba, the Commander of Repression, José María Sosa Molina found out about the order to cease fire and also Perón and Lucero resignations and went on the radio, saying: 'At noon, my world fell to the ground. With the battle almost won, I couldn't believe it. We had everything in our hands and we had to stop at the positions won.'

A Sherman tank of the government loyalist Cavalry Regiment No. 2 at Tornquist. (*La Revolución del 55*, Isidoro Ruiz Moreno)

General Iñíguez, however, decided to remove his troops from the city because he doubted whether all civilians would obey the ceasefire, and he could not return fire. Faced with the government's proposals, Rojas and Uranga invited the authorities to a meeting aboard the heavy cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre*, while Lonardi demanded that, as a condition, Perón formalise his resignation in the manner required by law.

At noon, the State Radio announced the 'resignation' of Perón. During the day, different units of the Armed Forces in the Province of Buenos Aires declared themselves revolutionaries: the NCO School, whose two combat columns were approaching Azul, the Tandil air base, directed by Commodore Guillermo Espinosa Viale, and the No. 1 Motorised Sapper Battalion based in San Nicolás de los Arroyos. There was a chain reaction: many units with clearly anti-Peronist officers rebelled, and those with loyal or apolitical officers stopped fighting. In Río Colorado, the troops of the Neuquén Mountain Group were intimidated into surrender or suffer a new bombardment: their commander, General Boucherie, went to the Espora base to meet with Rial and complete the formalities. There he explained how the movements of his troops had been, and described the terror caused by the bombing raids. Colonel Barrates, Chief of the General Staff of III Cavalry Division, who was in Tornquist, also arrived at the Espora base. He announced the surrender of General Molinuevo: and all the troops under his command abandoned the fight, except for the 3rd Infantry Regiment and the armoured vehicles. The 1st Cavalry Regiment, sheltered in a ranch near Tornquist, bowed to the revolution. At 3:45 a.m. in the early morning of the 20th, Puerto Belgrano received a communication from Corrientes, where the revolution had failed: General Giorello, head of IV Cavalry Division, surprisingly announced that all his units were at disposal of the Revolutionary Command. Furthermore, many military authorities in the Patagonian National Territories began to express their sympathy for the rebel side.

On the night of Monday 19th, a group of generals including Molina, Rivero de Olazábal, Fabri, Forcher, Bergallo and Polero spoke to Perón about the announced Military Junta that would take over the government, to which the President replied: 'You are wrong. Your interpretation can only have been the fruit of nervousness or concern: that letter did not question my status as President. I continue to be the Head of State.' At the meeting, Perón tried to convince the Generals that he had not actually resigned, but that in the resignation letter he had wanted to show his willingness to resign in the future. The board members stood firm and the meeting ended without any conclusive decisions.

The summons and requests for reports that Perón made from 10:00 p.m. on Monday, 19 September caused an almost unanimous rejection by the members of the Military Junta. General Ángel J. Manni explained:

> 'The mood of the cadre of generals was to end the fighting between the military forces and prevent a civil war at all costs. That is why I believe that the other members of the board have not thought about the resumption of operations, a hypothesis that was never raised and that I personally never considered. The Army would not fight to support a government in disrepute, it would never be the support of a tyranny, nor would it provoke a civil war. It is worth remembering that … the entire population knew the content of the communiqués, repeatedly broadcast by radio, and that especially here in the Capital, people took to the streets celebrating the fall of the former President; but the most important thing was that at this time all the repression troops lowered their weapons'

It was he who phoned one of Perón's assistants to inform him that the Junta was acting completely independently and that if Perón wanted to save his life, he should 'put distance as soon as possible.' Because of the seriousness of the ultimatum, Perón would, shortly after, seek refuge in the Paraguayan Embassy in Buenos Aires.

Tuesday 20 September

By 2:00 a.m. on the 20th, the Board had met again to deliberate on Perón's attitude. Most of its members were in favour of considering him definitively resigned. Suddenly, General Ímaz burst into the room with a group of armed officers and gave a speech about the need to avoid a civil war and prevent the Army from being manipulated, so the Board of loyal generals decided to terminate the government of Perón and offered power to General Lonardi and Rear Admiral Rojas. Major Gustavo Renner, Perón's assistant, was informed by General Manni that the Board of Generals had accepted the resignation of the President and that he should leave the country as soon as possible. This depressed Perón more, and he felt betrayed. But thus Perón was definitively out of the presidency. From that moment, the leadership managed to reassure many officers who until then were at risk of being shot for rebelling against the constituted authorities: since the Constitution does not allow a President to hand over republican institutions into the hands of a military junta, then already there were no legitimately constituted authorities, and therefore there were no longer rebels or loyalists.

A line of Army Sherman tanks at the Espora Naval air base, whose crew surrendered to the revolutionary forces when they were to be bombed by Naval Aviation. (Argentine Navy)

ARMADA
19
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VIACION NAVA

A Naval Aviation Sikorsky S-55 helicopter recovered the bodies of the crew from the shot down Grumman Duck. (Histarmar Archives)

Naval Aviation pilots. In the middle, standing, Frigate Lieutenant Miguel Irigoin, gunner of the Grumman Duck shot down by loyal forces, who perished with the pilot Lieutenant Commander Estivariz (first on the right, standing) and 2nd Corporal Rodríguez. (*Aviación Naval Argentina*)

Early in the morning of that day, around 6:30 a.m., General Lagos and his Chiefs of Staff, with Captain Carlos García Favre of the Navy, travelled on a Convair CV-240 of Aerolíneas Argentinas from El Plumerillo Airport to the Military Aviation School in Córdoba, where they were received by General Lonardi. Both discussed the immediate measures to take in the face of Perón's resignation and the possibility of a new attack on Córdoba by forces still loyal to the deposed President. Lonardi asked Lagos to establish a provisional government in Mendoza, but Lagos asked him to travel with him for that purpose, since Lonardi should be appointed as provisional President. Lonardi refused to abandon his troops in Córdoba because that city was still surrounded and they believed that defeat on that front was taken for granted, so Lagos agreed to form the government with the promise of handing it over to Lonardi at the end of the fighting.

Motorised Regiment No. 3 was in Pringles and armoured units loyal to Perón were in the town of Tornquist. The naval command decided to bomb these units, and three PBY-5A Catalina aircraft were prepared with 220-kilo bombs, with the support of Captain Rossi's Avro Lincoln. They took off towards the objective and once on it, information was received that the Sherman tank column was unconditionally surrendering. A Naval Aviation Douglas DC-3 with Marine Corps personnel was dispatched to take over the Shermans, and the tanks were taken to Espora.

That same day, revolutionary civil commandos had found the twisted and burnt remains of the Naval Aviation Grumman Duck that had been shot down by loyal forces, with its three crew members inside. The Duck had fallen into a shed, crashing into a tractor and a thresher. A Sikorsky S-55 naval helicopter was sent, piloted by Lieutenants Raúl Fitte and Juan María Vassallo, and proceeded to recover the bodies of the pilot Lieutenant Commander Eduardo Estivariz, the gunner Lieutenant Miguel Irigoin and the mechanic 2nd Corporal Juan J. Rodríguez, all of whom were given a funeral with full military honours.

Around noon an important meeting was held, attended by the Minister of War (General Lucero), the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (General Molina), the Chief of the General Staff (General Wirth), and the Deputy Chief of Staff (General Ímaz). Lucero reported Perón's decision and ordered Molina to join the Military Junta and Ímaz to notify all units of the ceasefire. At 12:45 p.m., the State Radio made this news public. Soon all the generals of the Buenos Aires garrison appeared at the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, together with the Auditor-General of the Armed Forces, General Oscar R. Sacheri, who brought the letter signed by the President and proceeded to explain its content: The Army should take charge of the situation, order, and the government. More than 30 generals were in the room, and it was

Tense meeting aboard the heavy cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre*. Generals Forcher, Manni and Sampayo are listening to the conditions of the victors being read by Captain Tarelli. Rear Admiral Rojas and General Uranga are silent on the right as is the auditor Sacheri, standing on the left. (*La Revolución del 55*, Isidoro Ruiz Moreno)

unanimously resolved to accept the resignation of the President and appoint a Military Junta to govern the country with the lieutenant-generals, the major-generals and the Auditor-General. Afterwards, a proclamation was drawn up that was signed by all the members of the board: Lieutenant-Generals José Domingo Molina and Emilio Forcher, Major-Generals Carlos A. Wirth, Audelino Bergallo, Ángel J. Manni, Juan J. Polero, Juan José Valle, Raúl Tanco, Carlos Alberto Levene, Oscar Uriondo, Ramón Herrera, Adolfo Botti, José A. Sánchez Toranzo, José León Solís, Guillermo Streicher, Héctor M. Torres Queirel, José C. Sampayo, and Brigadier General Doctor Oscar R. Sacheri.

A commission made up of Wirth, Manni and Forcher, whose objective was the pacification and cessation of hostilities, sent a message to Rojas and Uranga requesting their presence at the Buenos Aires Cabildo, or at the Palace of Justice, starting at midnight on the 20th to begin peacemaking efforts.

During the afternoon, to broaden the representativeness of the Board, the Commanders-in-Chief of the Air Force and the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Brigadier Juan Fabri and Admiral Carlos Rivero de Olazábal, were summoned. The board outlined the steps to follow: control all governments, provincial governments and the three branches of the national government, call elections according to the Sáenz Peña law, cancel the constitutional reform, and grant a broad amnesty to all those involved in the revolution, both military and civil.

The Junta proceeded to accept the resignation of Minister Franklin Lucero and to remove the leadership of the National Security Directorate by appointing new Chiefs of Police, of Prefecture and of the Gendarmerie. The General Secretary of the CGT, Hugo di Pietro, was also summoned, he stated that the denunciations of revolutionary strikes or the organisation of popular militias were inaccurate. Finally, General Manni summoned Major Alfredo Renner, Perón's assistant, who was in Lucero's office, and told him everything was over and that he should tell Perón to leave the country as soon as possible.

While this was all happening, in the early hours of that day, around 8:00 a.m., Perón asked his butler, Rienzi, to pack some clothes and money because he would be leaving the country, he had already requested and obtained political asylum at the Paraguayan Embassy in Buenos Aires (details of which will be discussed in the next chapter). Shortly afterwards, Lonardi issued a decree with the name of 'Decree No. 1' in which he called himself 'Provisional President of the Nation,' and he requested the recognition of other countries and established the provisional seat of government in the city of Córdoba.

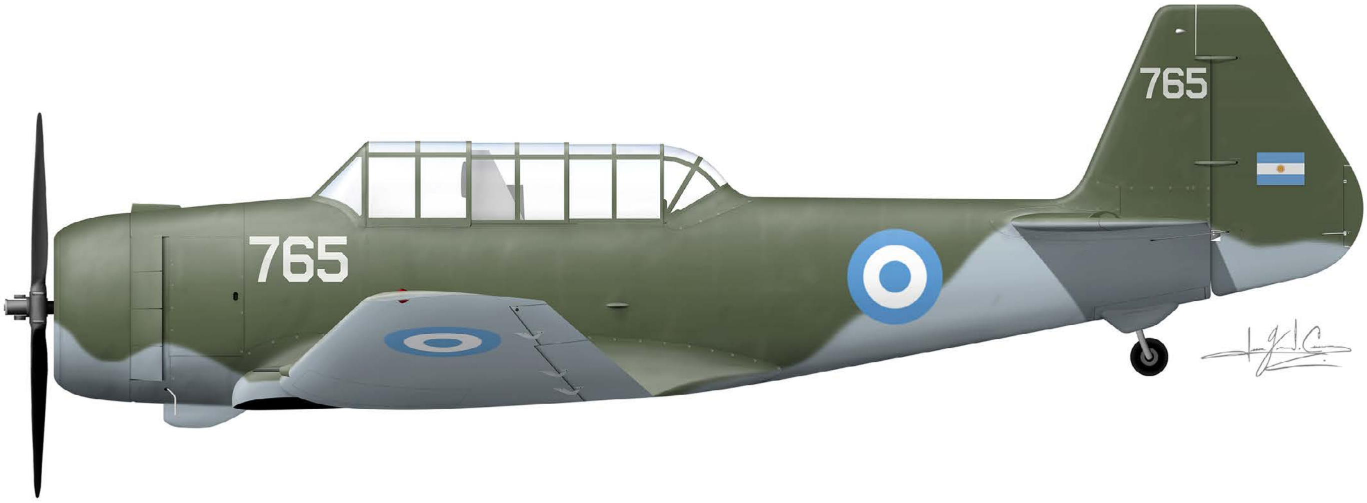
That night tranquillity reigned in Puerto Belgrano after the withdrawal or surrender of most of the attackers. On the other hand, in Córdoba, Mendoza and in the Río de la Plata the rebels had serious doubts about Perón's intentions since they had received reports that several trains with tanks and troops were arriving in Córdoba and La Plata. During the early morning Lonardi, at the Aviation School, received a disturbing message from the head of the Civil Security Forces, Pedro Juan Kuntz, from Córdoba, stating that armoured units were in Villa María in a convoy and that he needed at least 1,000 Molotov bombs to fight back.

In Buenos Aires the fleeting Junta, dedicated to pacification tasks, received suggestions from Rojas and Lonardi to stop the troop movements. But in the Capital of the republic, the revolutionary groups saw the movements of the General Labour Confederation, the Nationalist Liberation Alliance, and the Peronist Party, and in the local *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista* (*ALN*, Nationalist Liberation Alliance) premises, weapons were distributed and there was a lot of movement of people.

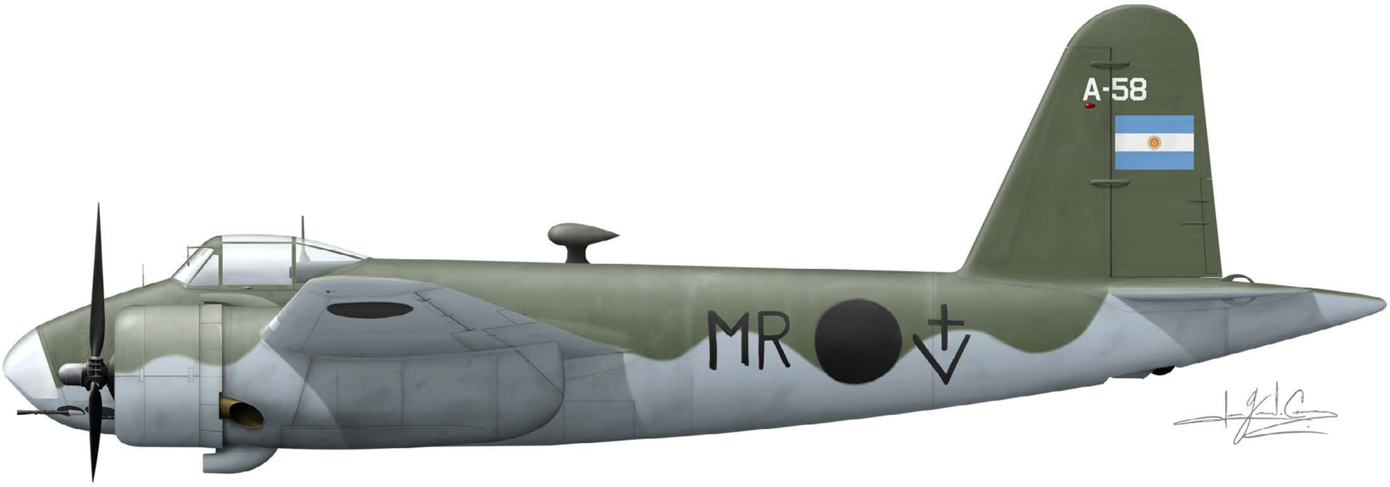
Río Cuarto saw a large number of government troops concentrated; whereas, the rebels only had the presence of a civilian command led by Luis Torres Fotheringham. Close to the city was the Las Higueras air base, and also the Holmberg arsenal. The presence of 15 tanks and a new contingent of infantry alarmed the rebels, who planned the bombardment of Las Higueras for the following day. General Lagos, unaware of the events of the Junta in Buenos Aires, outlined the possibility of withdrawing from San Luis and becoming strong only in Mendoza. To add to the confusion, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General José Domingo Molina, in a message to Lonardi said … 'He reported that the Military Junta accepted the resignation Mr President ... All movement of troops suspended.'

The rebels knew that the Peronist Military Junta claimed to have 'assumed the government of the republic,' however, Perón had not signed a resignation addressed to Congress: only an indefinite resignation addressed to the Nation and the Army. Faced with the power vacuum, Lonardi resolved to establish a revolutionary government, with himself as the President, with Captain Rial as Secretary General of the Government and Commodore Krause as Secretary of Foreign Relations.

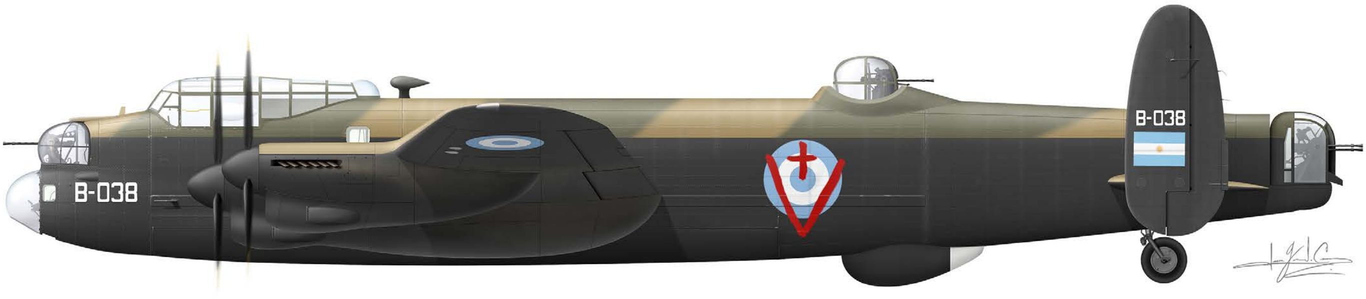
At 6:00 p.m. on 20 September, Lieutenant-General Forcher, Major-Generals Manni and José Sampayo and the legal officer Brigadier General Oscar Sacheri from the Military Junta boarded the



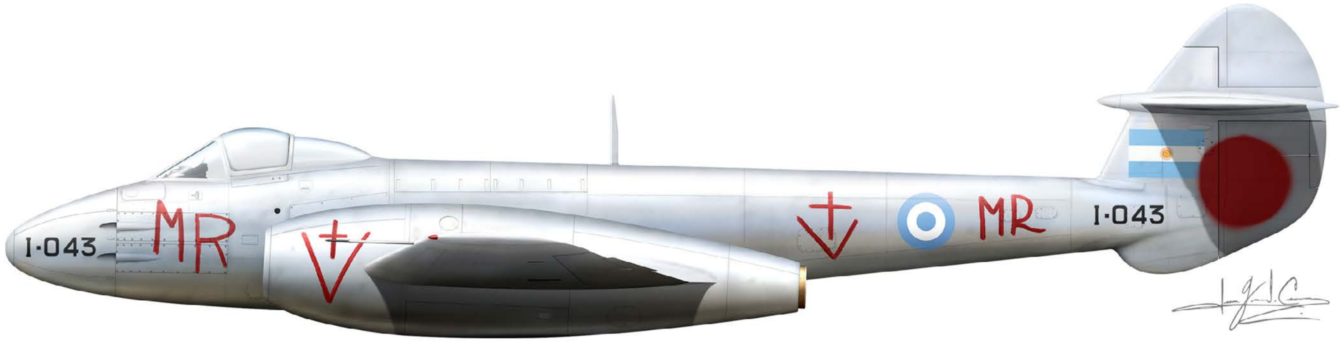
The FMA I.ae. DL-22, was a locally-designed and manufactured advanced trainer and light aircraft operated by the Argentine Air Force (Fuerza Aérea Argentina, FAA) from 1944 until 1959. A total of 201 were built and they were operated by the Training Air Group at BAM El Palomar, the I Air Brigade, II Air Brigade, Military Aviation School in Córdoba, and the Observation Group 1 at BAM General Urquiza. Their armament consisted of two wing-mounted machine guns of 7.65mm calibre, and they could carry three 50-kilogramme bombs or six 11-kilogramme rockets. All were painted, as shown here, in olive green on top surfaces and sides, with light blue-green on the under surfaces. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



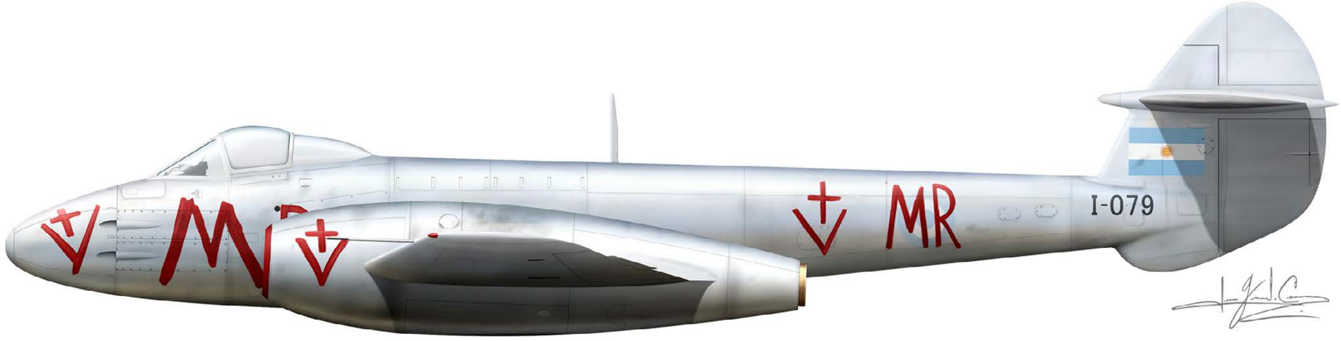
Another indigenous type operated by the FAA of the mid–1950s was the FMA I.Aé. 24 Calquín. A total of 101 were constructed and deployed as a light bomber and ground attack aircraft, it was in service from 1947 until 1959. They saw service with the 1st Air Regiment at BAM Colonel Pringles, 3rd Regiment at BAM El Plumerillo, and the 2nd Air Group at BAM Reconquista. Their armament consisted of four Browning machine guns of 12.7mm calibre, but they could also carry two 100kg bombs, or four 50kg bombs, or 18 bombs of 13 to 15kg, or 10 unguided rockets. This example is shown wearing the standardised camouflage pattern consisting of olive green on upper surfaces and light blue-grey on under surfaces. It received the 'MR' markings (standing for Revolutionary Movement), and the 'Cristo Vence' (Christ Wins) insignia, while all roundels were overpainted in black. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



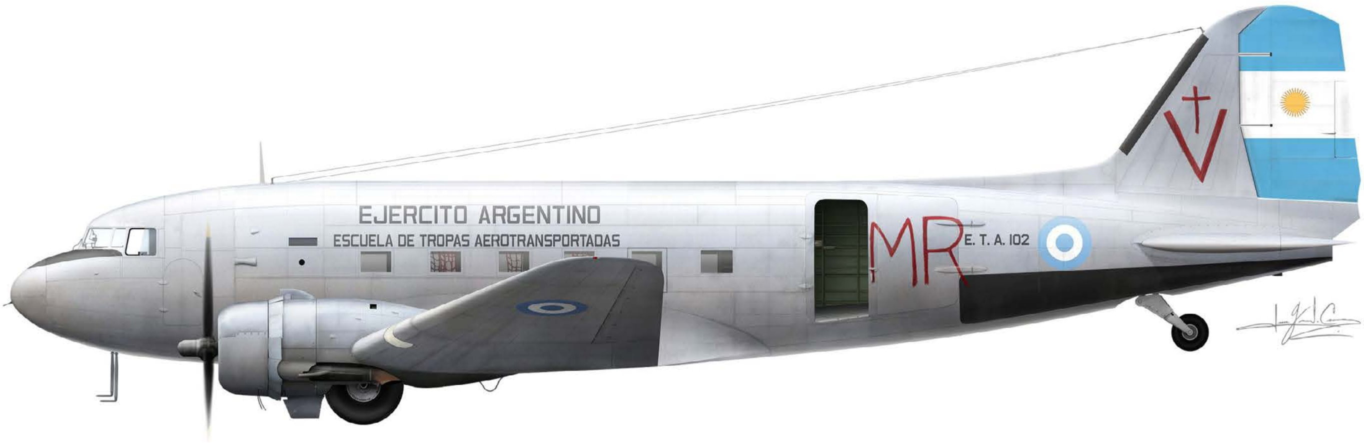
This was one of 15 Avro 683 Lancaster B. Mk I bombers operated by the Bombardment Group 1 from BAM Colonel Pringles, the V Air Brigade, and Bombardment Group 2 from BAM Reconquista, from 1947 until 1966. Their armament consisted of eight British Browning machine guns of 7.7mm calibre, and they could carry up to 6,350kg of bombs. All carried the standard RAF camouflage pattern in mid-stone and dark green on upper surfaces, and black on under surfaces and sides. In September 1955, this example, serial B-038, was secured by the revolutionaries and received their markings atop the roundel on the rear fuselage. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



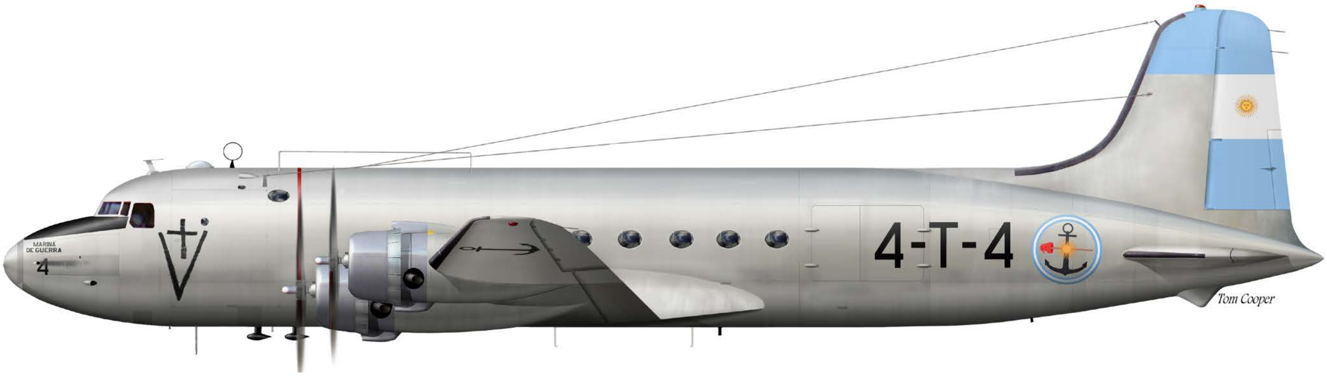
A total of 100 Gloster Meteor F.Mk 4 fighter jets formed the backbone of the *FAA*'s interceptor force of the mid–1950s, and remained in service with the 4th and 6th Air Regiments at BAM Tandil – and, later on, with the Fighter-Bomber Groups 2 and 3 of the VII Air Brigade – until 1970. Their primary armament consisted of four Hispano-Suiza 20mm autocannon, but they could carry up to 500kg of bombs, or 16 SCAR – or eight T-10 unguided rockets. Through the 1950s, all were left in bare metal overall: the example illustrated here received crudely-applied revolutionary markings, including the title MR and the *Cristo Vence*. It was in this guise that it participated in strikes on Argentine Navy warships off Buenos Aires. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



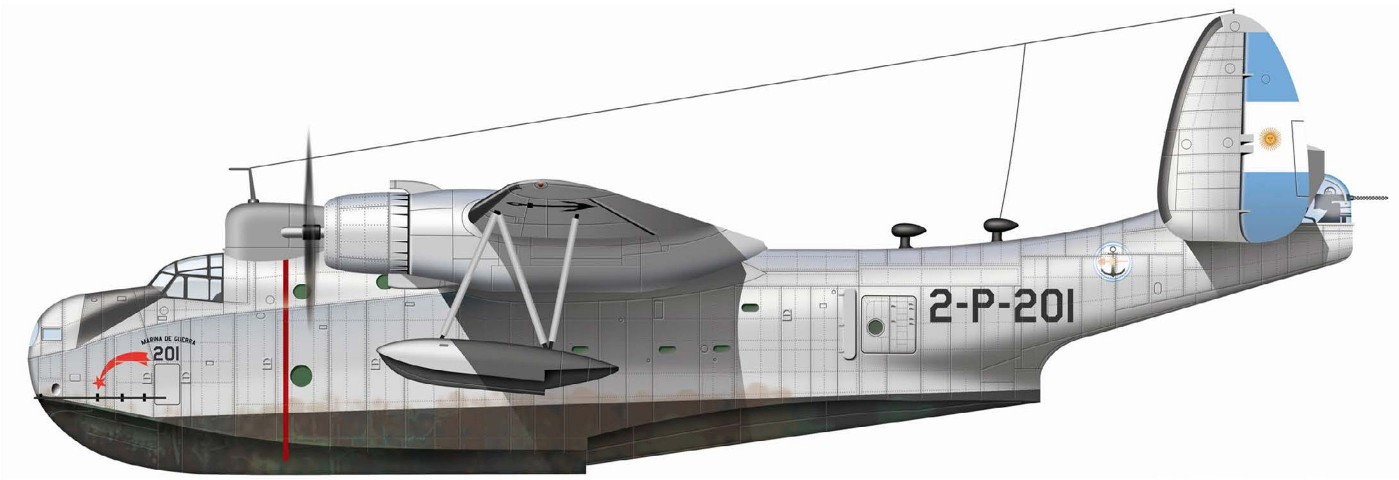
Another of five Meteor F. Mk 4 planes secured by the rebels while undergoing maintenance at the military aircraft factory in Córdoba was this example, serial number I-079. Starting with 17 September 1955, it was repeatedly deployed for attacks on warships of the Argentine Navy, as well as different ground targets. Around 15.15hrs of 19 September, while piloted by Lieutenant Alberto Morandini, it suffered an engine fire caused by overheating of the right turbine and crashed on approach to Córdoba airfield, killing the pilot. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



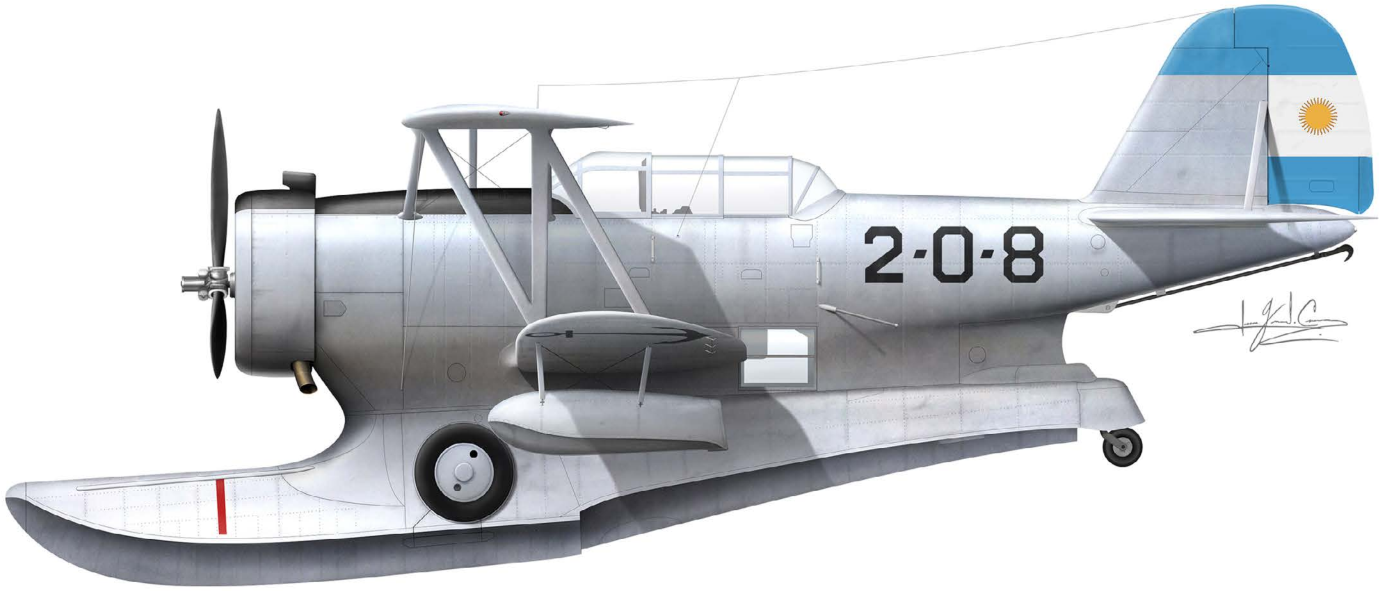
Except for five Meteors and a miscellany of DL-22s and I.Aé.24 aircraft, the revolutionary forces secured all three Douglas C-47 transports operated by the Army School of Airborne Troops at the time. While left in their overall bare metal livery, and with all other insignia in its place, they received the revolutionary markings on the rear fuselage and the fin, apparently all applied in red. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



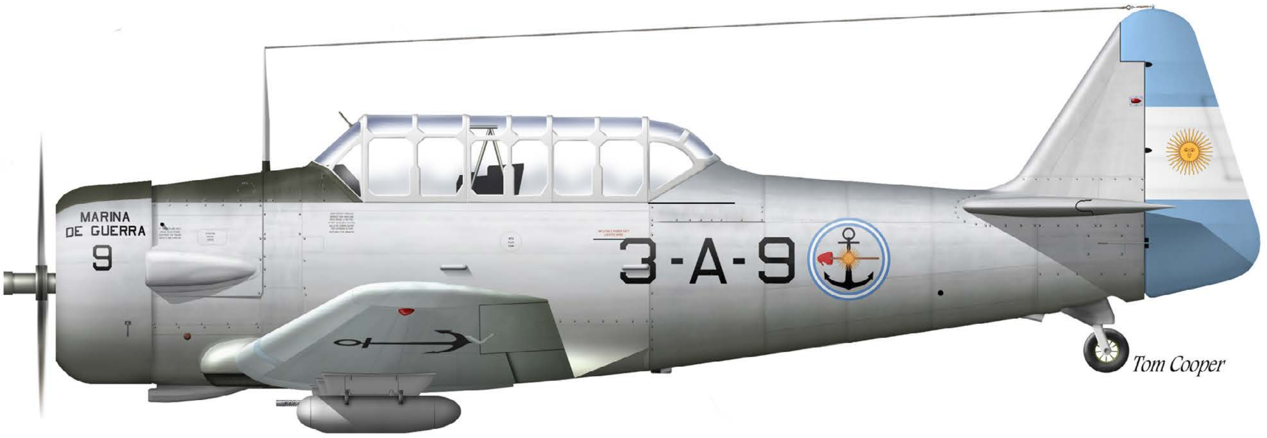
The Command of the Argentine Naval Aviation (COAN) acquired a total of seven Douglas C-54A Skymaster transports, and they served between 1947 and 1974. This example was secured by the revolutionaries at the Córdoba airfield and promptly received the revolutionary markings – applied at least on the forward fuselage, and in black: it remains unclear if any were applied on the rear fuselage as well. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



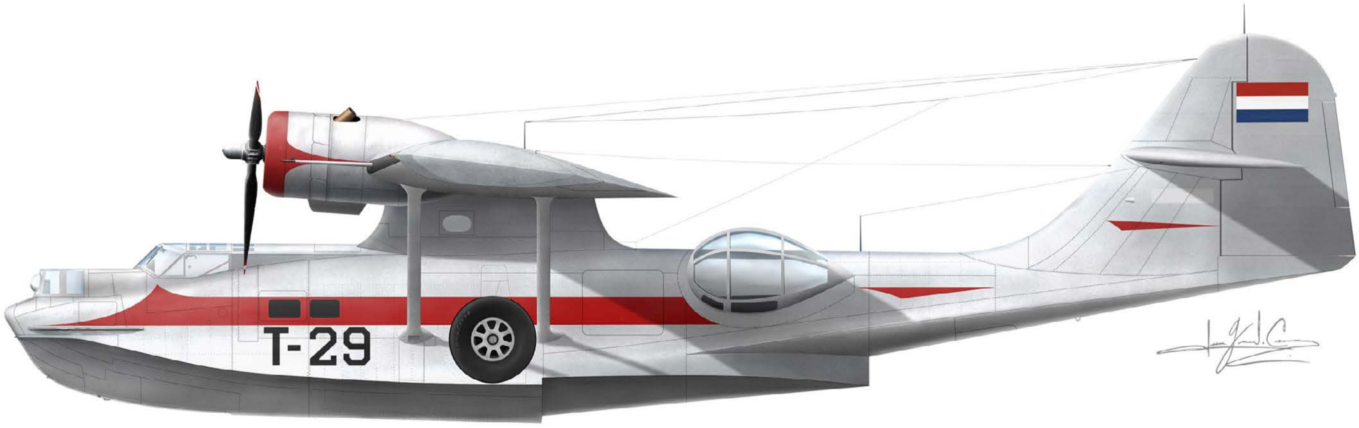
The 2nd Naval Air Squadron of the COAN operated two big Martin PBM5 Mariner amphibians as of 1955. They were painted in silver-grey overall (except for the top cockpit area, which was in white), and black on the underside of the fuselage and floats, and wore the Navy's insignia in four positions. By 1955, their serials were shortened to 2-P-21 and 2-P-22. One of them was involved in bombing of the fuel tanks in the Dock Sud area of Buenos Aires, on 19 September 1955, though without much success. (Artwork by Goran Sudar)



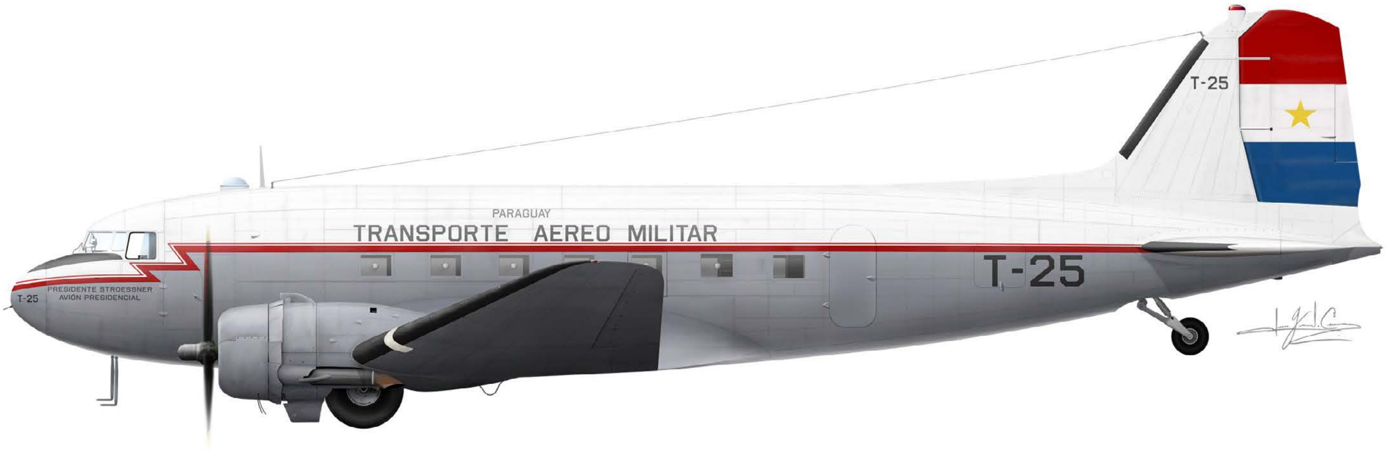
The Grumman J2F Duck was a single-engine amphibious biplane used for observation and search and rescue purposes, widely deployed by the U.S. Armed Forces of the mid–1930s. The COAN acquired 20 JF-2s in 1937, followed by four J2F-4s in 1939, and no less than 1 J2F-4s, 24 J2F-5s, and 7 J2F-6s in the period 1946–1947. They were operated by a single Observation Squadron and single examples were regularly deployed on the cruisers. Nine were secured by the revolutionaries in 1955, and at least seven of them saw action while armed with two internally installed Colt MG-40 7.65mm machine guns and four 11-kilogramme bombs. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



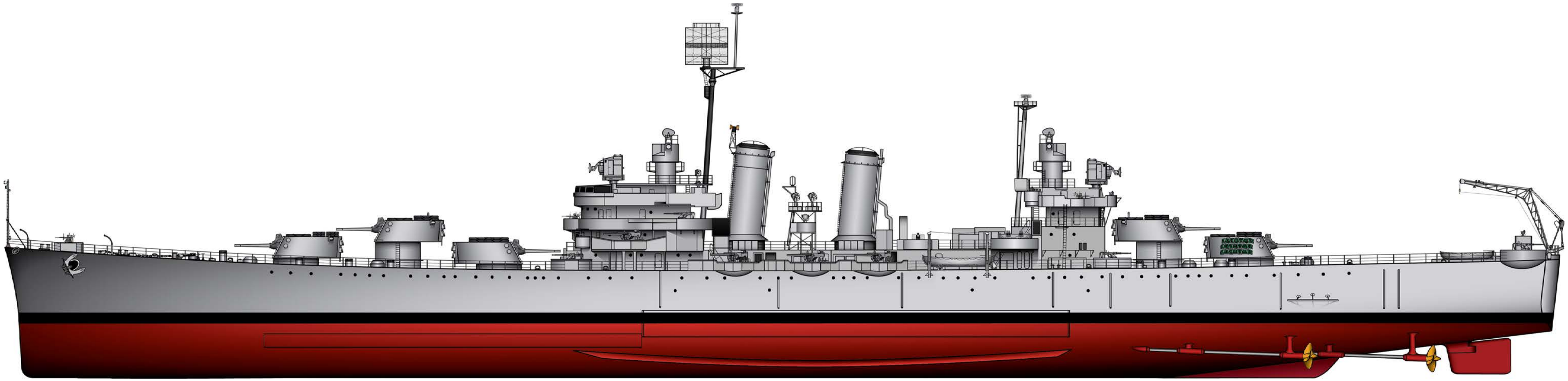
The COAN acquired a total of 49 North American AT-6A/B/C and SNJ3/4 Texan, and 30 SNJ5C training aircraft and operated them from 1947 until 1970. They served with the Training Squadrons and General Purpose and Light Attack Squadrons: a few were also used as advanced trainers on the aircraft carrier ARA *Independencia* (V-1). Standard armament consisted of two Browning M-2 machine guns installed in pods: these could be augmented by bombs and unguided rockets carried on four other underwing pylons. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



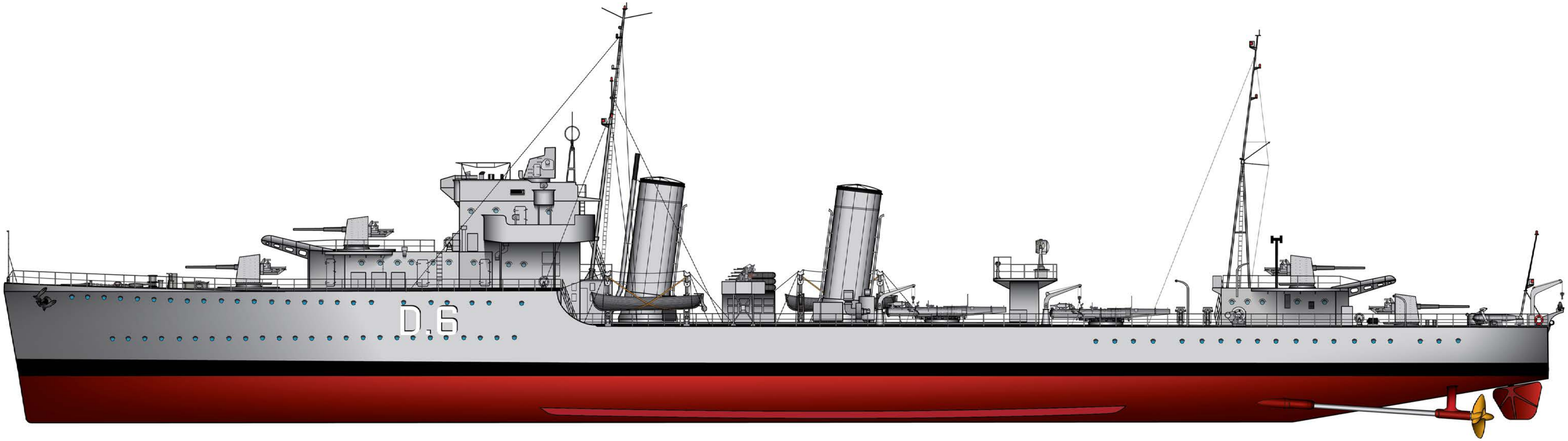
As of 1955, the Military Air Transport section (TAM) of the Paraguayan Air Arm was operating two Consolidated-Vultee PBY5A Catalina flying boats, and they were operated in cooperation with LATN. The example reconstructed here was the one that rescued the fleeing Argentine President Perón from the Paraguayan Navy gunboat ARP *Paraguay* (C-1), docked in the port of Buenos Aires. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



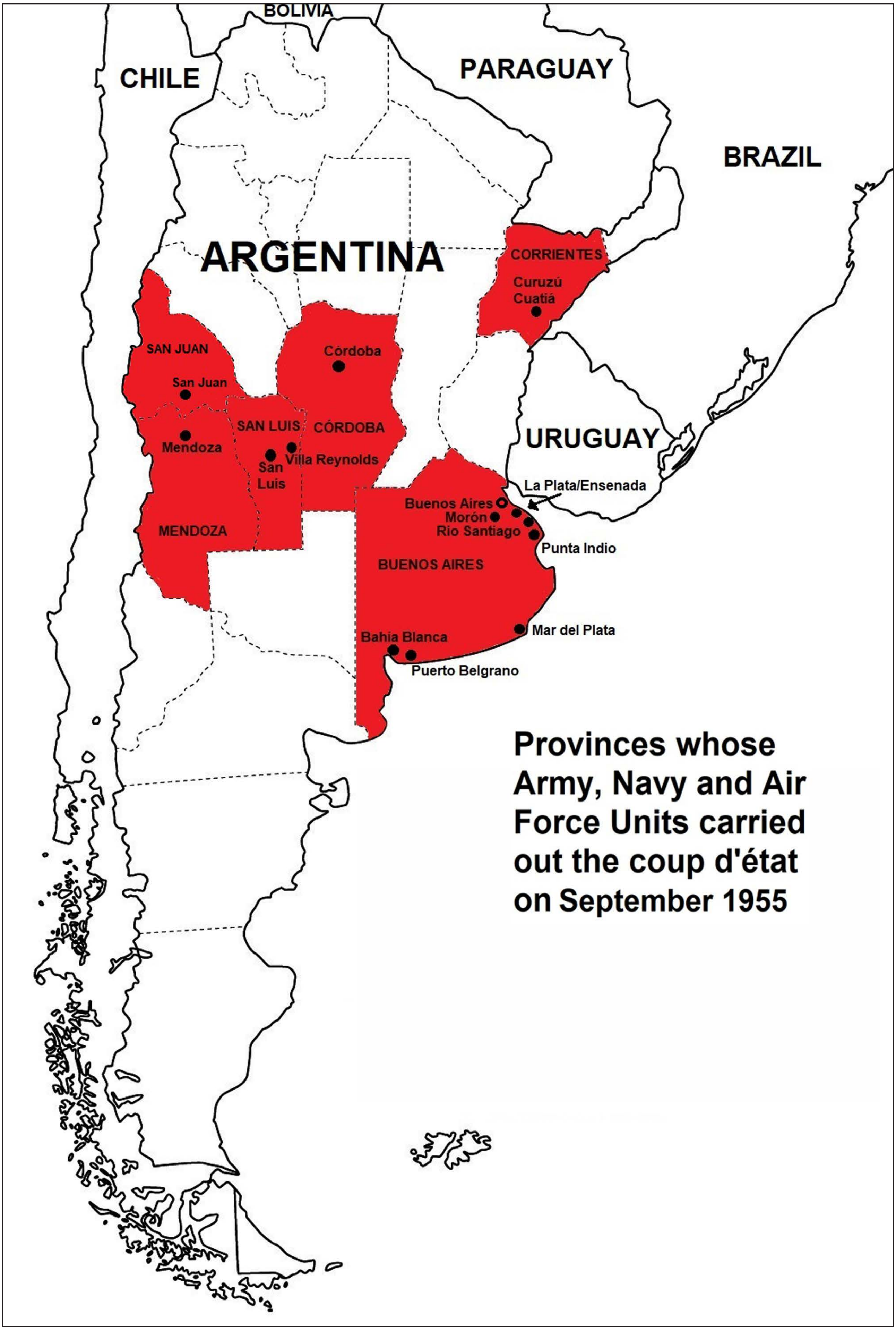
This was one of two Douglas DC-3As acquired by Paraguay in 1953-1955 period (additionally, the service had a single Douglas R4D-1 in 1955). Usually, this DC-3 was equipped with a comfortable interior and served as the presidential aircraft in Paraguay; however, time and again, it was deployed for regular flights around the country. In November 1955, it flew the former President Perón from Asunción to Panamá City. The T-25 continued serving for almost a decade longer, until destroyed in a fire that erupted while it was refuelled at the Encarnacion airstrip, in 1964. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



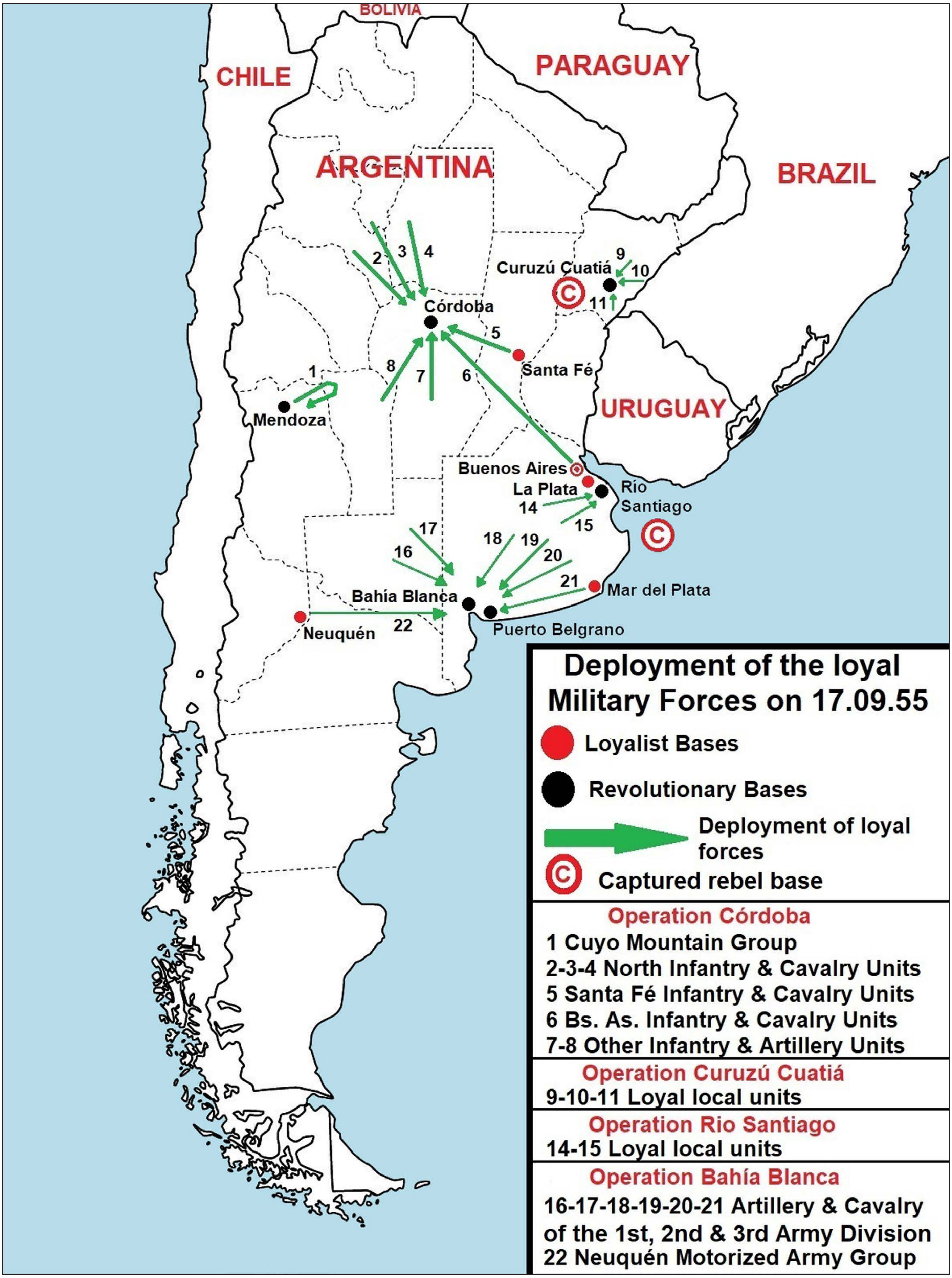
ARA *9 de Julio* (C-5) was constructed as USS *Boise* (CL-47) by Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, in 1936, as a Brooklyn class light cruiser. She displaced 12,403 tons at full load, was 180m long and had a top speed of 32.5 knots (60km/h). Primary armament consisted of 15 152mm (6in) guns; secondary armament included 8 127mm (5in) guns, and 8 12.7mm (0.50in) machine guns. USS *Boise* served in the Second World War in the Pacific, before being decommissioned on 11 July 1946. On 11 January 1951, she was sold to the Argentine Navy and christened *9 de Juilio*. Under the new flag, most of the machine guns were removed, but as of 1955 all the 152mm and 127mm calibre guns were still in place. This is a reconstruction of *9 de Julio* as of the time of the *Revolucion Libertadora*, when she saw relatively lots of action, principally through shelling oil depots in the Buenos Aires area, and military facilities in the city of Mar del Plata, on 19 September 1955. (Artwork by Ivan Zajac)



The *Buenos Aires*-class of destroyers was constructed in Great Britain during the 1930s, on an order for the Argentine Navy. Their design was based on the contemporary *G*-class destroyers of the Royal Navy and originally included four Mark IX guns of 120mm (4.7 in.) calibre, 8 12.7mm machine guns, and 8 533mm calibre torpedo tubes. After the Second World War, the ships were upgraded with the installation of radar, sonar, and one hand-operated Bofors 40mm autocannon, which replaced anti-aircraft machine guns originally installed between the two funnels. Except for the ARA *Buenos Aires*, depicted here, the class was made of ARA *Corrientes* (T8), ARA *Entre Rios* (T7/D.7), ARA *Misiones* (T11/D.11), ARA *San Juan* (T9/D.9), ARA *San Luis* (T10/D.10), and ARA *Santa Cruz* (T12/D.12). There is some uncertainty regarding the hull number as applied on this ship in September 1955: officially, since 1952, this should have changed from T6 to D.6. However, none of the available photographs confirms this. ARA *San Luis*, ARA *San Juan*, and ARA *Entre Rios* supported the cruiser ARA *9 de Julio* during attacks on the Mar del Plata area, and then shelled the headquarters of the Army Anti-Aircraft School, on 19 September 1955. (Artwork by Ivan Zajac)


BOLIVIA
CHILE
PARAGUAY
BRAZIL
ARGENTINA
CORRIENTES
Curuzú Cuatiá
SAN JUAN
San Juan
Córdoba
SAN LUIS
CÓRDOBA
Mendoza
San Luis
Villa Reynolds
URUGUAY
La Plata/Ensenada
Buenos Aires
Morón
Rio Santiago
MENDOZA
Punta Indio
BUENOS AIRES
Mar del Plata
Bahia Blanca
Puerto Belgrano
Provinces whose Army, Navy and Air Force Units carried out the coup d'état on September 1955

This map shows the Argentine provinces that joined the coup of 1955. (Map by Antonio Luis Sapienza)


BOLIVIA
CHILE
PARAGUAY
ARGENTINA
BRAZIL
URUGUAY
Curuzú Cuatiá
Córdoba
Santa Fé
Mendoza
Buenos Aires
La Plata
Río Santiago
Bahía Blanca
Mar del Plata
Puerto Belgrano
Neuquén
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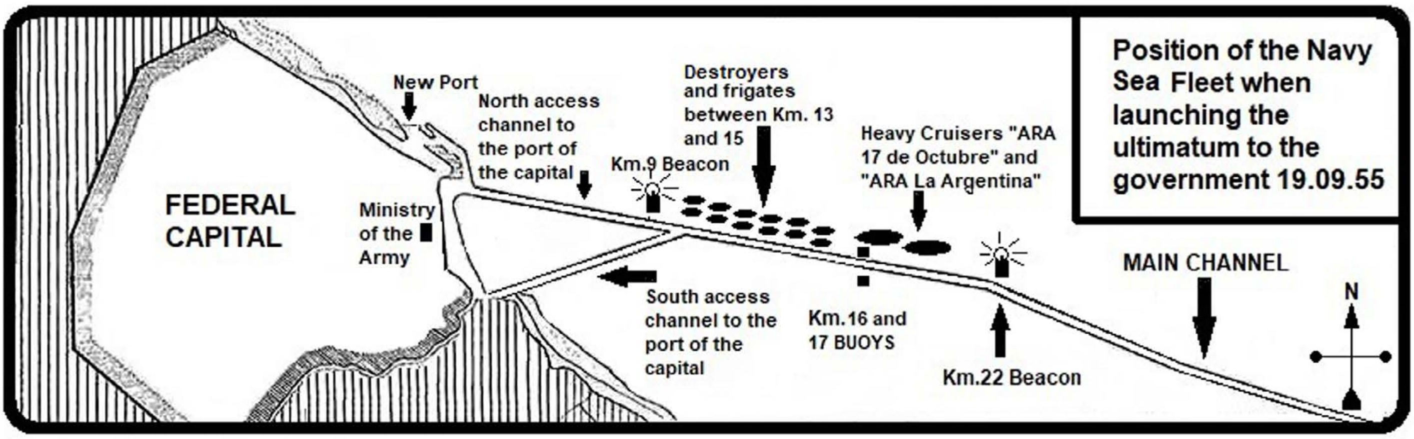
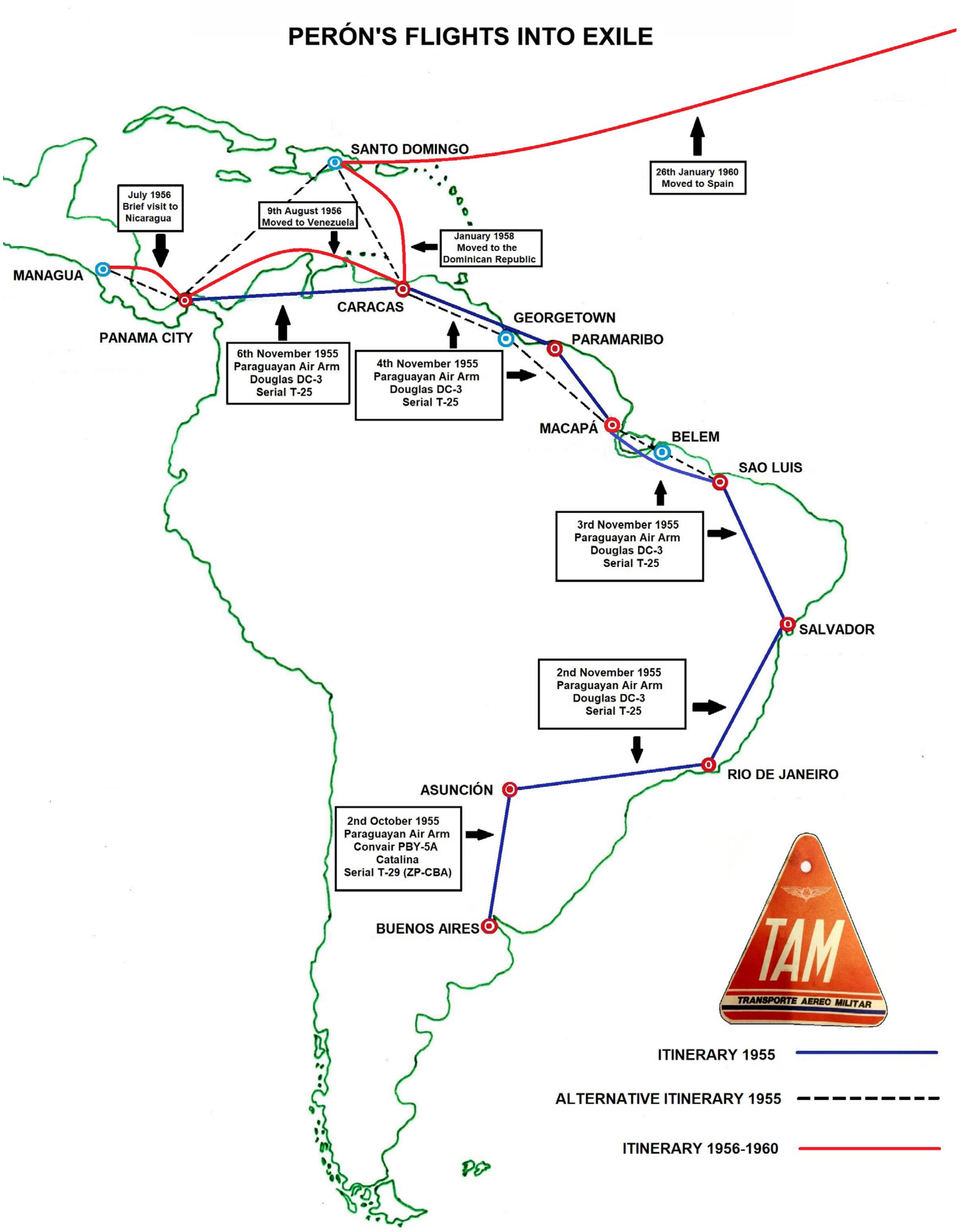
21
22
Deployment of the loyal Military Forces on 17.09.55
Loyalist Bases
Revolutionary Bases
Deployment of loyal forces
Captured rebel base
Operation Córdoba
1 Cuyo Mountain Group
2-3-4 North Infantry & Cavalry Units
5 Santa Fé Infantry & Cavalry Units
6 Bs. As. Infantry & Cavalry Units
7-8 Other Infantry & Artillery Units
Operation Curuzú Cuatiá
9-10-11 Loyal local units
Operation Rio Santiago
14-15 Loyal local units
Operation Bahía Blanca
16-17-18-19-20-21 Artillery & Cavalry of the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Army Division
22 Neuquén Motorized Army Group

As soon as the coup broke out, in September 1955, the government of General Perón mobilised loyal troops and re-deployed them as depicted on this map. (Map by Antonio Luis Sapienza)


Position of the Navy Sea Fleet when launching the ultimatum to the government 19.09.55
FEDERAL CAPITAL
New Port
North access channel to the port of the capital
Ministry of the Army
Destroyers and frigates between Km. 13 and 15
Km.9 Beacon
Heavy Cruisers "ARA 17 de Octubre" and "ARA La Argentina"
South access channel to the port of the capital
Km.16 and 17 BUOYS
Km.22 Beacon
MAIN CHANNEL
N

Map depicting positions of the Argentine Navy's warships as of the morning of 19 September 1955, when the ultimatum to surrender was given to the government. (Map by Antonio Luis Sapienza)


PERÓN'S FLIGHTS INTO EXILE
SANTO DOMINGO
26th January 1960 Moved to Spain
July 1956 Brief visit to Nicaragua
9th August 1956 Moved to Venezuela
January 1958 Moved to the Dominican Republic
MANAGUA
CARACAS
PANAMA CITY
GEORGETOWN
PARAMARIBO
6th November 1955 Paraguayan Air Arm Douglas DC-3 Serial T-25
4th November 1955 Paraguayan Air Arm Douglas DC-3 Serial T-25
MACAPÁ
BELEM
SAO LUIS
3rd November 1955 Paraguayan Air Arm Douglas DC-3 Serial T-25
SALVADOR
2nd November 1955 Paraguayan Air Arm Douglas DC-3 Serial T-25
RIO DE JANEIRO
ASUNCIÓN
2nd October 1955 Paraguayan Air Arm Convair PBY-5A Catalina Serial T-29 (ZP-CBA)
BUENOS AIRES
TAM
TRANSPORTE AEREO MILITAR
ITINERARY 1955
ALTERNATIVE ITINERARY 1955
ITINERARY 1956-1960

Map reconstructing all of Perón's flights between 1955 and 1960, before he finally settled in Spain (Map by Antonio Luis Sapienza) heavy cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre,* anchored in the roads off La Plata, to present themselves to Rear Admiral Rojas and General Uranga. General Lonardi had sent a representative, Major Juan F. Guevara. They were all treated with the dignity befitting their status. At that meeting they were informed of the demands of the revolutionaries, which included the surrender of all government forces and access to the presidency by General Lonardi on the 22nd. Points of agreement which resolved cessation of hostilities were: Cessation of national and provincial authorities, General Lonardi assuming provisional government under the motto 'neither winners nor losers,' solidarity between the armed forces and the population, constitutional rule within the broadest concept of liberty and order, operation of *Sáenz Peña* law, all social and worker conquests would be maintained intact and intervention for judiciary. Also, the revolutionary leaders demanded the immediate return to their garrisons of all military units loyal to the previous government, except those in the Federal Capital, which had to be evacuated before noon on 21 September, additionally all military aircraft had to be sent to the Comandante Espora naval air base.

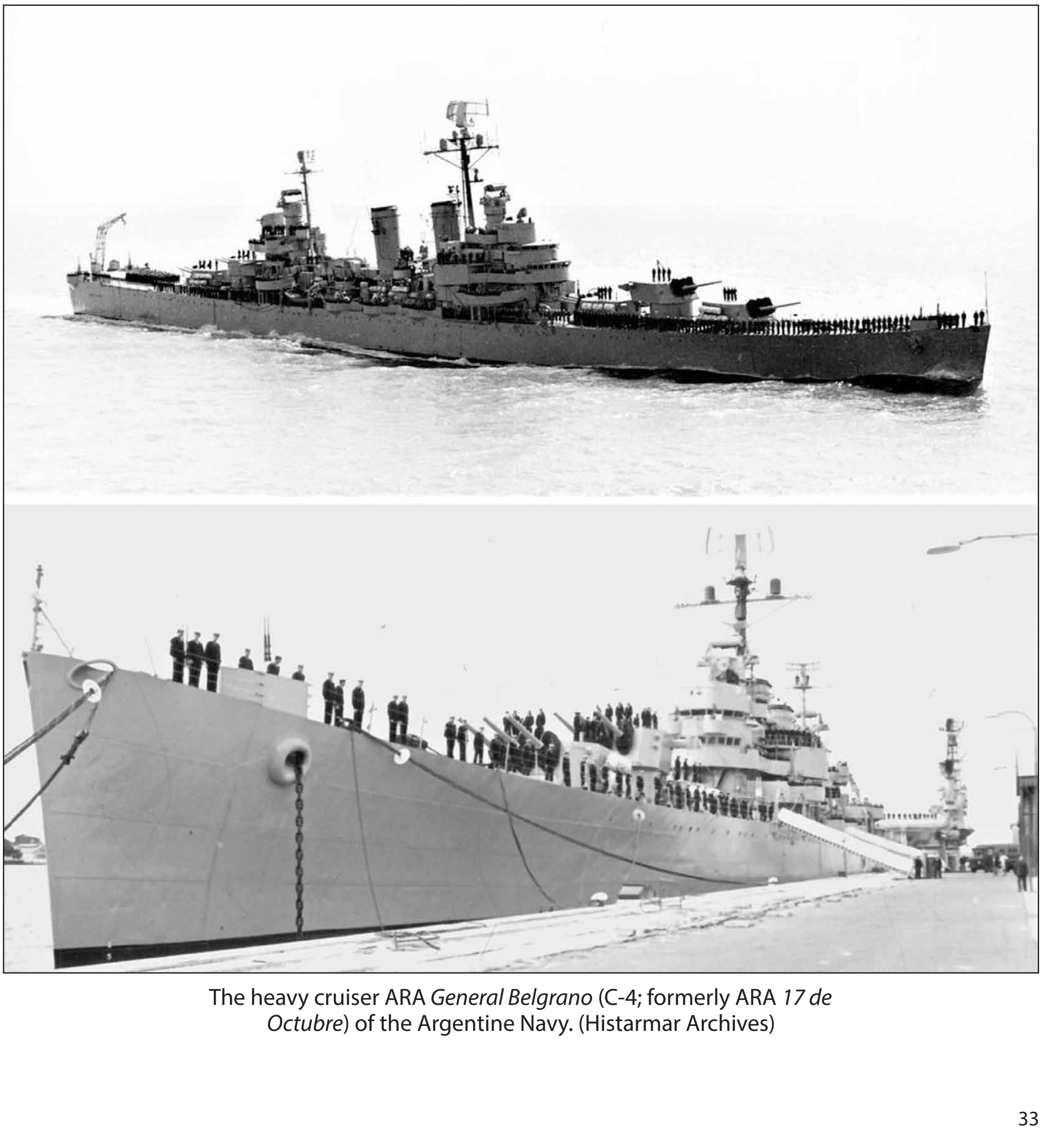
At dawn it became possible to establish telephone communication between the revolutionary provincial government of Mendoza and the rebellious civilians of Buenos Aires, General Tassi and Dr Alberto Tedín, to exchange news.

The Triumph of the Coup Forces

By dusk the loyal troops that had entered the Province of Córdoba were already returning to Tucumán and Santiago del Estero. At midnight, Lonardi and Krause's liaisons officers boarded the heavy cruiser ARA *17 de Octubre* and exchanged news with Rear Admiral Rojas. In the early morning, the first revolutionary leaders landed in the city of Buenos Aires, and they occupied the Ministry of War and the main army garrisons of the city.

The heavy cruiser C-4 ARA *17 de Octubre* (of the Brooklyn Class, former CL-46 USS *Phoenix* in the U.S. Navy, a WWII veteran, sold to the Argentine Navy in 1951) would be renamed ARA *General Belgrano* – General Manuel Belgrano was the creator of the Argentine Flag and also the founder of the Nautical School. The politically partisan name was removed, replacing it with the name of a national hero. This heavy cruiser would be sunk on 2 May 1982 during the Falklands War, after being torpedoed by the British

General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu celebrating the triumph of the Liberating Revolution in September 1955. (Archivo General de la Nación)



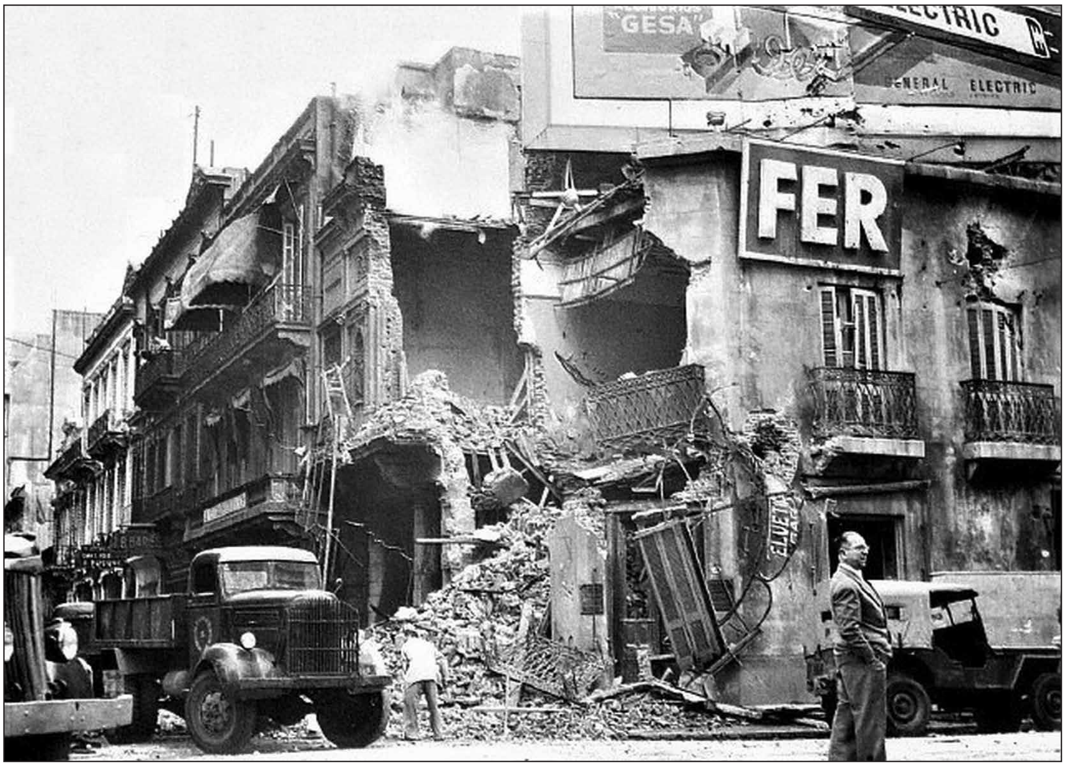
The heavy cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* (C-4; formerly ARA *17 de Octubre*) of the Argentine Navy. (Histarmar Archives)

Royal Navy nuclear submarine HMS *Conqueror*, killing 323 members of its 1,093 crew.

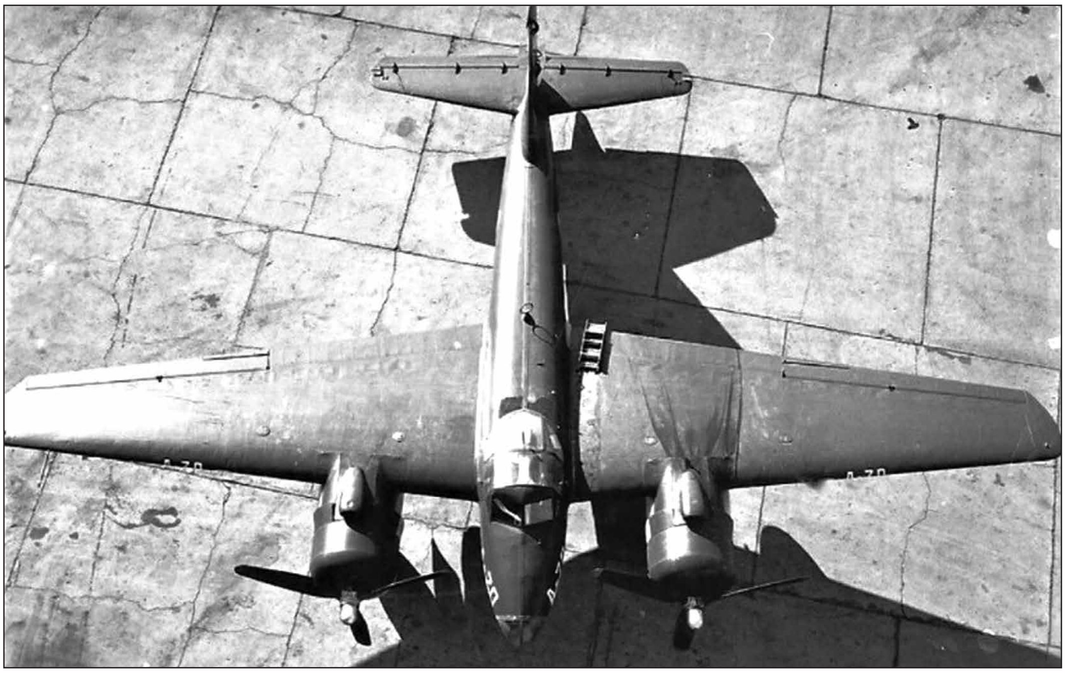
Wednesday 21 September

The acceptance of the conditions imposed by the revolutionaries on the Military Junta on the morning of 21 September put a formal end to hostilities throughout Argentina, but one last obstacle to total pacification had to be resolved.

The ALN was a right-wing, Catholic, Argentine nationalist group, notable for its violent actions. It was one of the first nationalist organisations that supported Peronism, and in the 1950s, the organisation was completely subordinated to the Peronist government.



Headquarters building of the *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista* (*ALN*), partially demolished, after it was attacked by Army Sherman tanks. (Public domain)



An overhead view of an I. Aé. 24 Calquín light bomber. (Dirección de Estudios Históricos de la Fuerza Aérea Argentina)

The ALN had rejected the ceasefire established by both sides and was preparing to fight. In view of this, the National Security Directorate, led by General Audelino Bergallo, the commander of the Buenos Aires garrison, did not hesitate to order its immediate destruction. At 1:14 a.m., 600 militants of the ALN, had sworn to give their lives for Perón, leaned out of the windows and terraces of the building and fired at the Army troops that had surrounded the building supported by some Sherman tanks. They received shrapnel fire and tear gas in response, but far from giving up their position, the alliance supporters stood firm, showing fanaticism and determination out of the ordinary. Then, in the middle of the fight, as the sound of rifle and machine gun bullets rang out sporadically, the Sherman tanks pointed at the mass of concrete and fired, shaking the centre of the city with their roar. The detonations were followed by others, followed by numerous volleys of small arms fire. The confrontation lasted until 2:00 a.m., when the damaged building began to burn. The Alliance barracks shook and collapsed to the ground as the tanks hit the ammunition stored in their warehouses. Many militants died and the rest had no choice but to evacuate, carrying or dragging their wounded. After half an hour of combat, the armoured vehicles fell silent but the ammunition continued to explode inside until after 2:30 in the morning. The headquarters of the *Nationalist Liberation Alliance*, symbol of the arrogance and outrage of the deposed regime, responsible for attacks and crimes of all kinds, collapsed, dragging part of the adjoining building with it as it fell. Two crews of fire-fighters attended the scene to prevent the flames from spreading to the neighbouring buildings.

On the evening of the 20th, in view of the fact that the units still loyal to the resigning government continued to move towards Córdoba and preparing for combat, it was decided to bomb the Las Higueras air base in Rio Cuarto. For this purpose Comorodo Krausse contacted the Naval Base of Comandante Espora, where two Avro Lincolns had landed days before. Captains Cappellini and Rossi were ordered to command these bombers. At 2:00 a.m. on the 21st, the Lincolns took off with 200-kilo bombs. They arrived over the Military Aviation School at 4:00 a.m., where they were in a holding pattern, since the time of the attack on Rio Cuarto was set for 6:00 a.m. Already on the objective at that time, all the bombs were dropped, about 10 in total, but two were hooked up an unable to release. The bombs did not cause any considerable damage and there were no casualties, but that was the idea, simply to intimidate those still loyal to Perón. The Lincolns returned to Espora and had managed to dislodge the last two bombs at sea before landing. Straight after this raid, the still loyal forces contacted the revolutionaries in Villa Reynolds to announce that Generals Prata, Falconnier and Cortínez were returning to Buenos Aires and the armoured vehicles would not advance against either Córdoba or San Luís.

After 9:30 a.m. on the same day, the State Radio publicly announced that the Junta had accepted the peace conditions of the revolutionaries.

From Morón, 14 Calquín light bombers took off bound for Córdoba, landing on the runway of the Military Aviation School, leaving the group at the disposal of the Revolutionary Air Commander Commodore Julio César Krause.

At 1:30 p.m., the General Secretary of the CGT addressed the workers asking, 'to maintain the most absolute calm and continue their tasks, receiving only directives from this workers' union. Each worker in his position, along the path of harmony.' At 5:30 p.m., Iñíguez entered the city of Córdoba to meet with the victors: he was received by Ossorio Arana, since Lonardi was in the provincial Government House installing Videla Balaguer as provincial auditor. After that Iñíguez's troops began the march back to the province of Santa Fé.

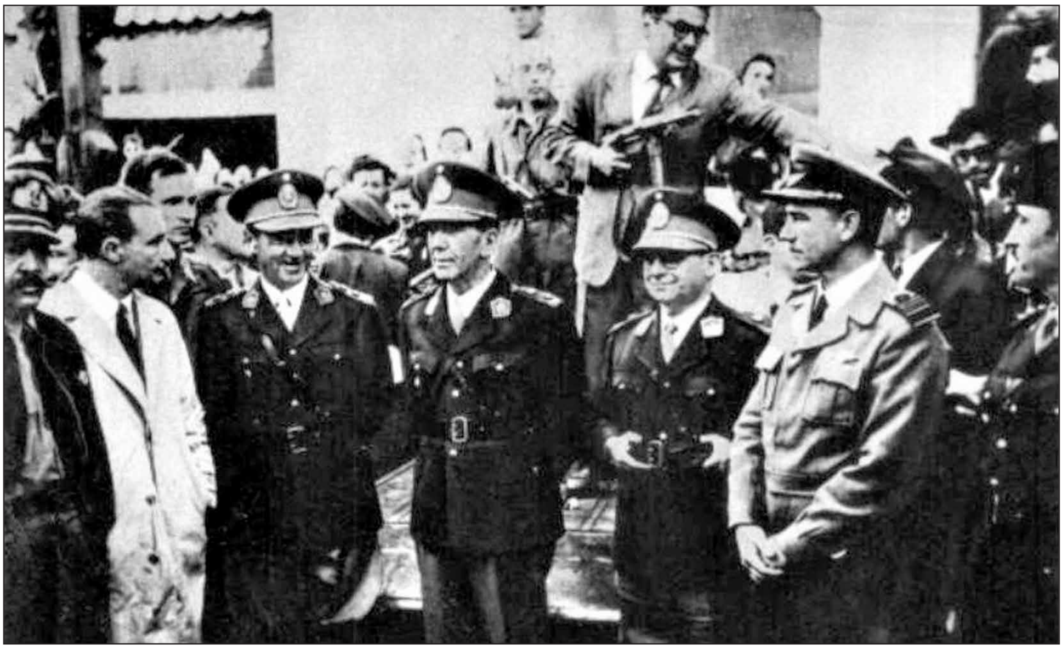
Thursday 22 September

On the 22nd, the victory parade was held in Córdoba along Vélez Sarsfield Avenue, at the head of the delegation were Colonel Arturo Ossorio Arana, Commodore Cesáreo Domínguez, and Ship Lieutenant Raúl Ziegler. In the official box were Generals Lonardi, Lagos and Videla Balaguer, Navy Captain Rial and Commodore Krausse. A huge number of people attended the parade, expressing their joy and support for the revolutionaries, including students, religious and medical personnel. Several Gloster Meteors overflew the parade, led by the FMA I.Aé. 33 Pulqui II flown by Captain Jorge Suarez. At least 11 Calquín light bombers also flew over the parade. Upon returning to base, Calquín serial A-76, crewed by 2nd Lieutenant Edgardo Tercilio Penazzi (pilot) and the mechanic Corporal Gerardo Otto Grafenstein, had a fatal accident due to the fact that during the turn at a low altitude before landing, it entered the wake of the turbulence of the plane that preceded it, rushing to the ground.

On the same day, Uruguay recognised Lonardi as President of Argentina while the latter dissolved the National Congress and appointed auditors in several provinces. Also, General Aramburu and a collaborator of General Lagos met to evaluate the scenario, and concluded that the liberal wing was in trouble and was going to be excluded from the government that was being organised.

It was agreed that Lonardi would fly to Buenos Aires during the first hours of the 23rd, to allow time for the arrival of other

The city of Córdoba, the epicentre of the fighting against the Peronist regime was the scene of multiple parades of civilians and soldiers to celebrate the triumph of the Liberating Revolution. (Jorge R. Schneider)

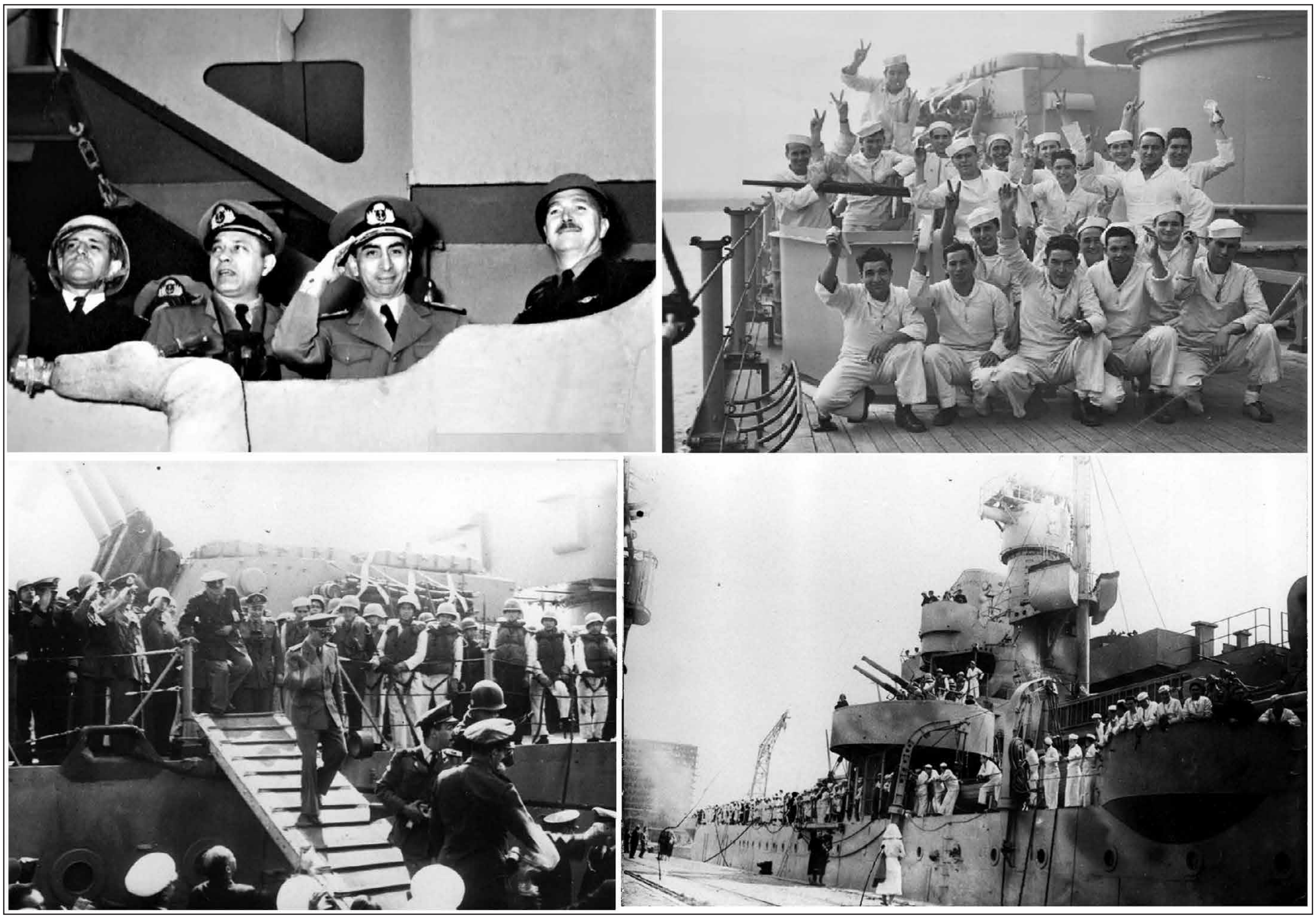


Some leaders of the Liberating Revolution: from left to right, Navy Captain Rial, Lieutenant Commander Colleta (in civilian clothes), Army Generals Lagos, Lonardi and Videla Balaguer and Air Force Commodore Krausse. (Public domain)

revolutionary figures from the rest of the country, especially after the release of several army officers who had been held in Río Gallegos since the 1951 pronouncement, among them were Alejandro Agustín Lanusse and Agustín Pío de Elía. Those senior naval officers who had participated in the June uprising were also released, including Vice Admiral Toranzo Calderón and former Minister Olivieri, who were transported to the Espora base in an Aerolíneas Argentinas DC-3, escorted by aircraft from the Air Force and Naval Aviation. They were received with great enthusiasm by their naval comrades and by the general population of Bahía Blanca.

The following days

On Friday 23 September, Rear Admiral Rojas arrived at the port of Buenos Aires at 11:00 a.m. aboard the heavy cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* while General Lonardi arrived by air from Córdoba in Douglas DC-3 serial T-23 of the Air Force at the Federal Capital airport at 12:30 p.m. The airport was soon renamed Aeroparque Jorge Newbery, in honour



Rear Admiral Rojas surrounded by his staff gives a military salutes upon his arrival in Buenos Aires aboard the renamed heavy cruiser *ARA General Belgrano* (top left).
Sailors show their happiness for the triumph of the Liberating Revolution (top right).
Rear Admiral Rojas disembarking from the ARA *General Belgrano* (bottom left).
The heavy cruiser ARA General Belgrano in the port of Buenos Aires (bottom right). (Argentine Navy)

FUERZA AEREA ARGENTINA

General Eduardo Lonardi descends from an Air Force Douglas DC-3 in Buenos Aires to be sworn in as provisional President of Argentina. Behind him is Commodore Krausse of the Air Force (left). (Pablo L. Potenze collection). The Buenos Aires Metropolitan Airport, originally called Aeroparque 17 de Octubre was renamed Aeroparque Jorge Newbery straight after the 1955 coup (right). (Fotos Antiguas de Buenos Aires)

Archivo General de la Nación

General Lonardi swearing in as President of Argentina in the Casa Rosada. Rear Admiral Rojas swearing in as Vice President in the Government House (right). (Archivo General de la Nación)

to the Argentine pioneer pilot. Rojas was waiting for Leonardi and they both rode together to the Casa Rosada. It was then that Lonardi asked Rojas if he would join him in the government as vice president, an offer that Rojas accepted.

They also discussed the appointment of new ministers for the Navy and Army, Admiral Hartung and General Bengoa respectively. Hours later, both officially assumed their high positions, sworn in as Provisional President and Vice President respectively. Once that was done, the Military Junta disappeared. It had performed a useful role, keeping order in the Capital and discouraging worker demonstrations.

The front page of the Clarín newspaper on that day called on the population to be present in the Plaza de Mayo with the following headline, 'An appointment of honour with freedom. The night has also been left behind for the Republic.' Lonardi's assumption was accompanied by a large crowd gathered in the Plaza de Mayo. Some slogans were shouted by the crowd, 'Argentines yes, Nazis no', 'San Martín yes, Rosas no', 'YPF yes, California no', 'We do not come by decree, nor do they pay us the ticket.'

On Sunday 25 September, the governments of the United States and Great Britain recognised the military government, the latter after providing significant support to the insurgents.

Victims

The number of people killed in the coup was at least 156. Of these 156 victims, 107 were confirmed in Córdoba, 28 in Buenos Aires, 16 in Ensenada, 4 in Rosario and 1 in Reconquista.

Hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Plaza de Mayo to express their support for the new authorities of the triumphant Liberating Revolution on 23 September 1955. (Archivo General de la Nación)

3

THE AFTERMATH

The first measures of the de facto government

The coup that overthrew Perón meant the return of the military to power. During the very brief administration of General Lonardi first and then General Aramburu, a series of decisions were taken that would mark the political life of the nation in the post-Perón era.

Between 15 and 26 October, the trial of Perón was carried out *in absentia*. The charges were:

A) Sowing hatred in the Argentine family and inciting violence and crime.
B) The burning of the flag.
C) Failure to comply with the oath to respect the National Constitution.
D) Disloyalty with the institution.
E) Fussiness in living.
F) Relationships with a minor.
G) Not facing responsibility.

From left to right, the President General Eduardo Lonardi, the Vice President Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas, the Minister of the Army General Justo León Bengoa and the Minister of the Navy Admiral Teodoro Hartung. (Public domain)

He was found guilty of all the charges presented, and the court unanimously ordered the prohibition of his holding the rank and wearing the uniform of the Argentine Army, because of the indignity of his conduct. The court of honour was chaired by Lieutenant-General Carlos Von der Becke and its members were Lieutenant-Generals Juan Carlos Bassi, Víctor Jaime Majó and Basilio

The end of an era? The victors of the Liberating Revolution thought so. For the next 18 years, Peronism was banned, but it returned and is still in force today in Argentina. Throughout the country, monuments, statues and busts were destroyed in 1955. (Public Domain)

B. Pertiné. President General Lonardi issued Decree No. 2,034 confirming the sentence.

Regarding the Armed Forces, there was obviously a purge of those elements that were very close to Perón, and over 1,000 officers were forced into retirement along with a great many NCOs.

The new de facto government almost immediately took the following steps:

- The Dissolution of Congress.
- The Intervention of the provincial governments.
- Intervention of the CGT.
- University intervention.
- Dissolution of the Peronist Party (Decree No. 3,855 of 24 November 1955).
- The members of the Supreme Court of Justice were dismissed.
- Constitution of the National Investigative Commission.
- ‘Kidnapping’ and disappearance of the body of Eva Perón.
- Bank deposits were returned to private banks.
- Prices were released.
- Wages were frozen.
- Repeal of The Constitution of 1949.
- Decree Law No. 4161 was enacted, which prohibited from naming Perón and Evita, using their photos, and saying ‘Peronism’, ‘Peronist’, ‘Justicialist’, ‘third position’, and also the singing of the Peronist march.
- The representatives and senators who had approved the Five-Year Plans were imprisoned for ‘treason against the Nation.’
- 31 men, civilian and military, who under the command of General Juan José Valle had attempted a revolutionary coup in order to restore democracy were shot.
- Evita’s wardrobe was exhibited in the Presidential Residence.
- Monuments, statues, books, and magazines that made reference to Perón or Evita were destroyed.
- The *IAPI* (*Instituto Argentino de Promoción del Intercambio*, Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Trade) was liquidated.
- The María Eva Duarte de Perón Social Aid Foundation was closed.
- The peso was devalued.
- The entry into the International Monetary Fund was implemented.
- Loans were taken out that started the external debt.

The Post-Coup Palace Coup

Shortly after Lonardi took office, the differences between the two wings of the military regime became apparent: The Catholic nationalist wing, led by Lonardi himself, more conciliatory, and the liberal wing, led by Vice President Admiral Isaac Rojas, supported a radical anti-Peronism, aimed to totally eradicate Peronism from Argentine political and trade union life, repeal the social and labour measures established during the Peronist government and establish a conservative economic policy directed by the most economists.

General Eduardo Lonardi only lasted as President of Argentina for three months, being replaced by General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu on 13 November 1955 through a palace coup. (Public domain)

By the end of October, the competing tensions increased. Peronism began to reorganise and regain its capacity for action, and even whistled the de facto Vice President, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas, on the occasion of a visit by him to the San Isidro Hippodrome, which was frustrated a few minutes later when aircraft of the Navy began to fly low over the stands.

The toughest sectors, led by Aramburu and Rojas, accused Lonardi of a certain complacency towards the deposed Peronism. The pressures reached the limit and, given Lonardi’s refusal to resign, his enemies threatened to bomb the presidential residence. In the last days of September, military forces occupied the popular neighbourhoods of Rosario and the towns of Berisso, Ensenada and Avellaneda. The demonstrations against the regime were violently repressed. Many businessmen began to arbitrarily dismiss union delegates and to suppress legally established social benefits, to the point that on 27 September, the Ministry of Labour had to issue a wake-up call to the employers who produced these events.

At 2:35 a.m. on 12 November, almost all of the members of the Advisory Board submitted their resignation to Rojas. The *lonardistas*, Ariotti and Storni, remained in their posts. Lonardi’s son, Luis Eduardo, in his book *God is Just,* detailed the last hours of his father in power, ‘Ossorio Arana came forward and ... told him: Mr General, I must tell you, on behalf of the Armed Forces, who have lost their confidence and are demanding your resignation. They give only five minutes to present it. After this deadline, force measures will be adopted and there will be bloodshed.’ Someone confirmed, ‘When I left, the Glosters were already warming up the

President General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (right) with Vice President Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas. (Archivo General de la Nación)

engines.' Other threats were to bomb the presidential residence, the *Quinta de Olivos,* and they threatened to repeat on a small scale the bombings of 16 June. Among them were Ossorio Arana, Admiral Hartung, Generals D'Andrea, Huergo, Videla Balaguer and Dalton, Rear Admirals Toranzo Calderón and Rial, and the secretary general of the Presidency, Colonel Boncarrere. The two members of the Advisory Board who had not resigned the night before were soon separated from it. A seditious focus for the overthrow of Lonardi was located in the Military House, a body that was responsible for the President's security, hearings and protocol and whose head was Colonel Bernardo Labayrú. The head of the Government House office was Colonel Emilio Bonnecarrere and the commander of the Horse Grenadier Regiment was Alejandro Lanusse, all of whom had the obligation to defend the President; however, they were active and decisive members of the conspiracy.

On 13 November, a palace coup ousted General Lonardi from power, installing a liberal, General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, as the new de facto President, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas continued as Vice President. The following day the military government released three communiqués with Aramburu's signature, reporting on the reasons for Lonardi's replacement: the first was limited to reporting Lonardi's dismissal; the second maintained that Lonardi had been deposed because of the, 'presence of groups that oriented their policies towards totalitarian extremism incompatible with the democratic convictions of the Liberating Revolution,' and the third broadened the reasons by accusing Lonardi's group of, 'hiding behind the banner of the Catholic religion.' Three days later, the Aramburu government decided to intervene in the General Confederation of Labour (*CGT*) and on 30 November the Peronist Party was dissolved. For all of these reasons, as well as many others, the Aramburu government received the nickname 'Gorilla' by the Peronists.

President Pedro E. Aramburu in civilian clothes. (Diario Clarín)

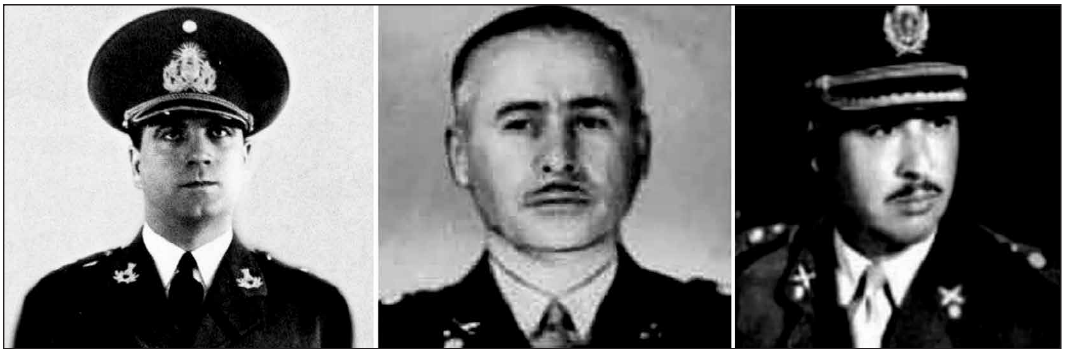
In the midst of the strong civil-military pressure, the former President General Lonardi, accompanied by his wife, Mercedes Villada Achával, had to flee to New York. At 5:45 p.m. on 29 November 1955, they set out aboard the *Río Tunuyán*, a modern passenger and cargo steamer built by the Peronist government in Italy. On the Caracas stopover, Lonardi learned that his house had been raided. He was already very sick and his decision to travel to the U.S. was to receive cancer treatment. He returned to Argentina where he died on 22 March 1956, he was only 59 years old.

This seriously snubbed all the nationalist militants who had participated in the coup. The manner in which the arrests of high-ranking officers within the forces occurred was considered scandalous. General Uranga was arrested at his home, in a violent manner, while Bengoa, together with numerous civilians and soldiers who had held high positions during the Lonardi regime, was immediately arbitrarily arrested and, as in the case of so many others, without following the necessary procedural channels.

Months later, already during the Aramburu government, the characters close to Lonardi suffered incarceration and long months in prison (around a year in most cases). In this way, a peculiarity of the Liberating Revolution was made explicit: those who had carried out the 'revolution' against Perón on 16 September 1955, were, just one year later, imprisoned by their own coup comrades.

The Uprising of General Valle

The first attempt by Peronism to return to power took place a few months after the triumph of the Liberating Revolution and as a consequence, the government of President Aramburu had to face an armed uprising. The two main conspirators were the General Juan José Valle and General Raúl Dermirio Tanco but the uprising barely lasted 12 hours. President General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu and Vice President Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas knew of the conspiracy, although not the day and time when the uprising would take place, but they had decided not to prevent it. Thus, on the night of 8 June,



The leaders of the 1956 uprising. From left to right, General Juan José Valle, General Raúl Delmirio Tanco and Lieutenant-Colonel Oscar Cogorno. (Public domain)

Sherman Firefly tanks of the Argentine Army in the mid–1950s. (Argentine Army)

hundreds of union leaders were arrested in order to reduce the social base of the movement.

Both Generals Valle and Tanco had been part of a Military Junta of 17 generals who on 21 September 1955 had begun negotiations with the coup plotters, and had agreed with them the basis on which they would hand over power, which was done on the 23rd of that same month. General Miguel Ángel Iñíguez was also involved, he was to be the Chief of Staff of the revolution, but since he had been arrested long before its outbreak, he did not participate in it. The rebels counted on taking advantage of the resentment of many retired officers and non-commissioned officers and the uneasiness of those who were on active duty, but they did not obtain the support of Perón, who at the time was in exile in Panama.

On the night of 9 June 1956, the uprising began but was quickly defeated, with few armed confrontations, although five soldiers died: Blas Closs, Rafael Fernández and Bernardino Rodríguez who resisted the uprising and Carlos Yrigoyen and Rolando Zanetta, of the Peronist side.

In Campo de Mayo, the rebels led by Colonels Cortínez and Ibazeta seized the Infantry Grouping of the NCO School and the Grouping of Services of the 1st Armoured Division, but the occupation of the NCO school failed after an intense fire exchange and the attacking group was cut off. Both Colonels were captured, together with five other officers. Brigadier General Juan Carlos Lorio presided over a court that held a summary trial. He concluded that the rebels should not be shot but Aramburu did not ratify his decision. Lorio asked that it be given in writing, so Aramburu and his government issued Decree 10,364 that detailed the list of officers who should be shot (the only execution order officially recorded in all Argentine history). Six of the seven officers were executed on 11 June. There are no records of these summary trials, nor of the forensic report that should have determined the cause of death.

Elsewhere, a group of non-commissioned officers rose up at the Army Mechanics School, but had to surrender shortly after because they were overwhelmed by forces loyal to the government. Four NCOs were executed, and another three were sent to the National Penitentiary, accused of being collaborators.

In Avellaneda, near the Command of the Second Military Region, some skirmishes between rebels and the police took place, and some prisoners were taken. The police then stormed the Industrial School, surprising Lieutenant-Colonel José Irigoyen and a group of six officers who wanted to install a General Valle Command post and a clandestine radio station there. They were immediately subjected to a summary trial, and were executed in Lanús, between 02:00 and 4:00 am on 10 June.

In La Plata, Captain Morganti, led the company under his command of 7th Regiment into rebellion, while groups of civilians took over the telephone company facilities. Colonel Cogorno was the leader of the uprising in La Plata. They were all captured, and Cogorno was shot on 11 June at the 7th Regiment's headquarters.

The Government's response was almost immediate and Sherman tanks were dispatched, followed by trucks with troopers to suppress the uprising. Immediately they went into combat causing several deaths

An Argentine Army infantryman patrolling the streets of La Plata during the 1956 uprising. (Public Domain)

and numerous injuries to the rebels, who ended up surrendering. The uprisings occurred between 10:00 p.m. and midnight on 9 June. At 12:32 a.m. on 10 June, the Government established Martial Law by a decree of Aramburu, Rojas, the ministers of the Army, Arturo Ossorio Arana, of the Navy; Teodoro Hartung; of the Air Force, Julio César Krause and of Justice, Laureano Landaburu. Therefore, martial law could not be applied to the insurgents since the alleged crime committed occurred before it came into force, violating the legal principle of non-retroactivity of the criminal law. A few hours later, they signed Decree 10,363 that ordered the shooting of those who violated the martial law. Hours later, in the José León Súarez garbage dumps, the Buenos Aires police, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Desiderio Fernández Súarez, ordered the head of the San Martín Regional, Commissioner Rodolfo Rodríguez Moreno, to execute 12 civilians with small arms, which he did. Of the twelve, five died and seven managed to flee. At the Army Mechanics School, General Ricardo Arandía had already consulted Aramburu in Buenos Aires by telephone on 10 June at noon, about the detainees.

On 12 June, Valle decided to surrender in exchange for the suppression of his movement restrictions to be lifted, and his life to be respected. It was the turn of the Navy Captain Francisco Manrique, envoy from Rojas, to go to look for him. At 2:00 p.m. that day, Valle entered the base of Regiment I of Palermo with his friends Gabrielli and Manrique, where he was interrogated and tried by a court – also presided over by General Lorio. Later, Valle was taken to the National Penitentiary on Las Heras Avenue and was housed on the 6th floor. The last person to see him alive was his daughter Susana Valle. At 10:20 p.m., Valle was executed using 7.65mm Mauser Argentine model 1909 rifles, by a platoon, the identity of its members was kept a state secret. There was no written order for a firing squad, or registration of those responsible.

On 13 June, martial law was lifted. General Tanco with other rebels managed, on 14 June, to take refuge in the Haitian Embassy in Buenos Aires, under the protection of Ambassador Jean Brierre. However, General Domingo Quaranta (head of the SIDE) illegally invaded the delegation together with a group of civil commandos, to kidnap and detain the asylum seekers. The civil commandos tried to shoot them at the Embassy door, but the presence of witnesses prevented them. Ambassador Brierre began a series of negotiations with the Foreign Ministry and finally managed to have the hostages returned to his Embassy.

The balance of those 72 hours in June 1956 was tragic and gave way to the bloodbath that the country would suffer in future years: 18 soldiers and 13 civilians were killed. This event became known as 'Operation Massacre.' The former President Perón, already in exile, did not support this uprising. Because of these executions, the Peronists changed the name of 'Revolución Libertadora' (Liberating Revolution) to 'Revolución Fusiladora' (Fusilier Revolution).

Elections

In 1957, elections were called for a Constituent Assembly, in a framework of the proscription of Peronism. These elections led to the division of the Radical Civic Union by agreeing an accord with Peronism, led by Arturo Frondizi. When the constituents of Frondizi withdrew, the Constituent Assembly limited itself to re-establishing the 1853 text and approving a broad set of social rights that were included as article 14 *bis*.

Finally, Aramburu called elections in which the Peronist Party – which continued to be banned – could again not participate, although some new parties, called neo-Peronists, did. Perón chose to give his support to Arturo Frondizi, who won the elections on 23 February 1958 and assumed power on 1 May of the same year, despite pressure from some opposed military groups, and Aramburu immediately requested to retire from the army.

President-elect Dr Raúl Frondizi is greeted by outgoing President General Pedro E. Aramburu on 1 May 1958. (Public Domain)

4

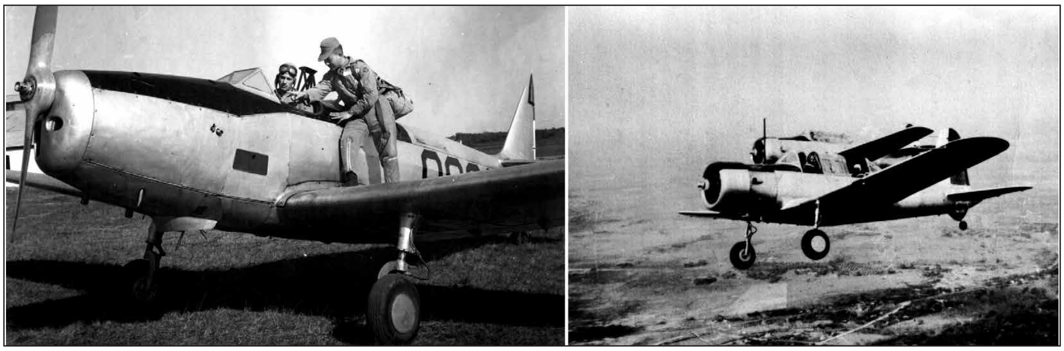
ASYLUM AND EXILE OF FORMER PRESIDENT PERÓN

President Perón visited Paraguay on four occasions. The first time was in 1948 with his wife Evita, when they met with Paraguayan President, General Higinio Morínigo, aboard the Argentine presidential yacht Q-72 ARA *Tecuara* at the confluence of the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers. The Argentine presidential couple was decorated by the Paraguayan government on this occasion. The second visit was in October 1953, when he was received in Asunción by the then Paraguayan President, Federico Chaves.

His next visit to Paraguay was in August 1954, shortly after the inauguration of President General Alfredo Stroessner and as a gesture of goodwill to the new Paraguayan government, he returned several Paraguayan flags that had been captured in the War of The Triple Alliance (1864–1870). From then on, relations between the two leaders became closer and this is why Perón requested political asylum in Paraguay in September 1955.

(Left) President Juan Domingo Perón and his wife Evita being decorated by the Paraguayan President General Higinio Morínigo on board the Argentine presidential yacht ARA *Tecuara* in 1948.(The Sphere, London, page 234)
(Right) Presidents Perón and Chaves in Asunción in 1953. (Public Domain)

President General Perón in Asunción with his Paraguayan Counterpart General Stroessner in August 1954. (Foto Reinaldo)



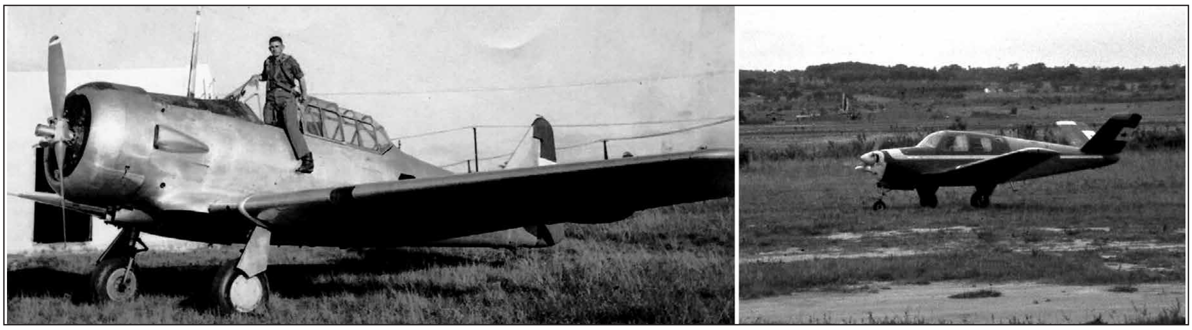
A Paraguayan Air Arm Fairchild PT-19A primary trainer at Ñu-Guazú air base in the mid–1950s (left). (Colonel Yebrán Archive).
A Paraguayan Air Arm Vultee BT-13 basic trainer flying in formation with a North American AT-6C Texan (right). (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)

In the mid-1950s Paraguay had a very modest Air Arm, more dedicated to social aid than to defending itself, although with great pride as it had already had its baptism of fire in 1932 during the Chaco War. At that time, the Paraguayan Air Arm had around 850 effectives, including officers, NCOs and draftees, and the following 35 aircraft on strength:

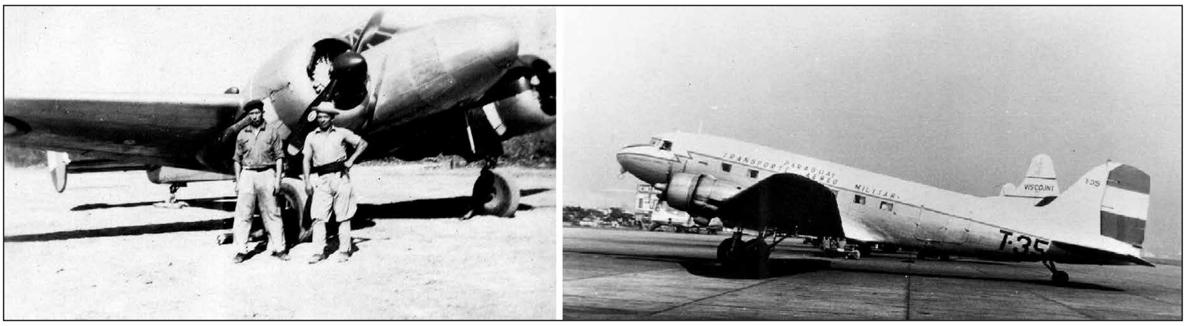
His officers at that time never imagined the daring challenge that fate was preparing for them. His contribution was not only going to make history, but it demanded to push the effort of men, pilots and limited resources that the institution had to the limit, flying over unknown territory, using all available air navigation resources. This operation also helped to pacify the spirits due to the difficult internal crisis that Argentina was experiencing, saving the physical integrity of who would be three times its President.

On 20 September 1955, at around 8:00 a.m., a very cold and rainy day, the former Argentine President, General Juan Domingo Perón, took refuge in the Paraguayan Embassy in the city of Buenos Aires, at 1851 Viamonte Street, together with Major Ignacio Cialceta and his personal aide, Mr Rugero Zambrino. Former Foreign Minister Dr Ildefonso F. Cavagna Martínez and Navy

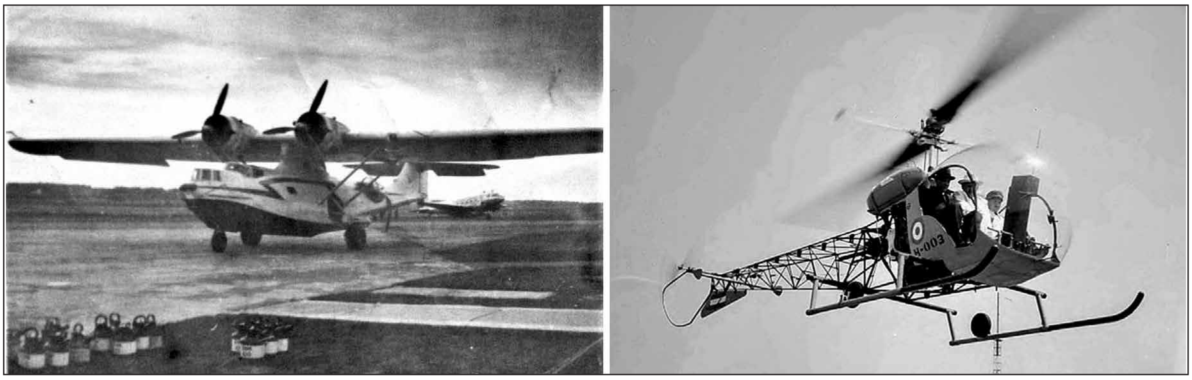
Aircraft Type	No. of Aircraft *	Role
Fairchild PT-19A	10	Primary trainer
Vultee BT-13A Valiant	8	Basic trainer
North American AT-6C Texan	3	Advanced armed trainer
Beechcraft A35/F35 Bonanza	3	Light transport
Beechcraft UC-45F Expeditor	2	Light transport
Douglas DC-3/C-47	5	Transport (Military Air Transport/TAM)
Consolidated-Vultee PBY-5A Catalina	2	Transport (jointly used by TAM and LATN)
Bell 47G.2	2	Utility helicopter
* The number of aircraft corresponds to the ones in service in the Air Arm in 1955.		



A Paraguayan Air Arm North American AT-6C Texan advanced trainer in the late 1950s (left). An Air Arm Beechcraft A.35 Bonanza (right). (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)



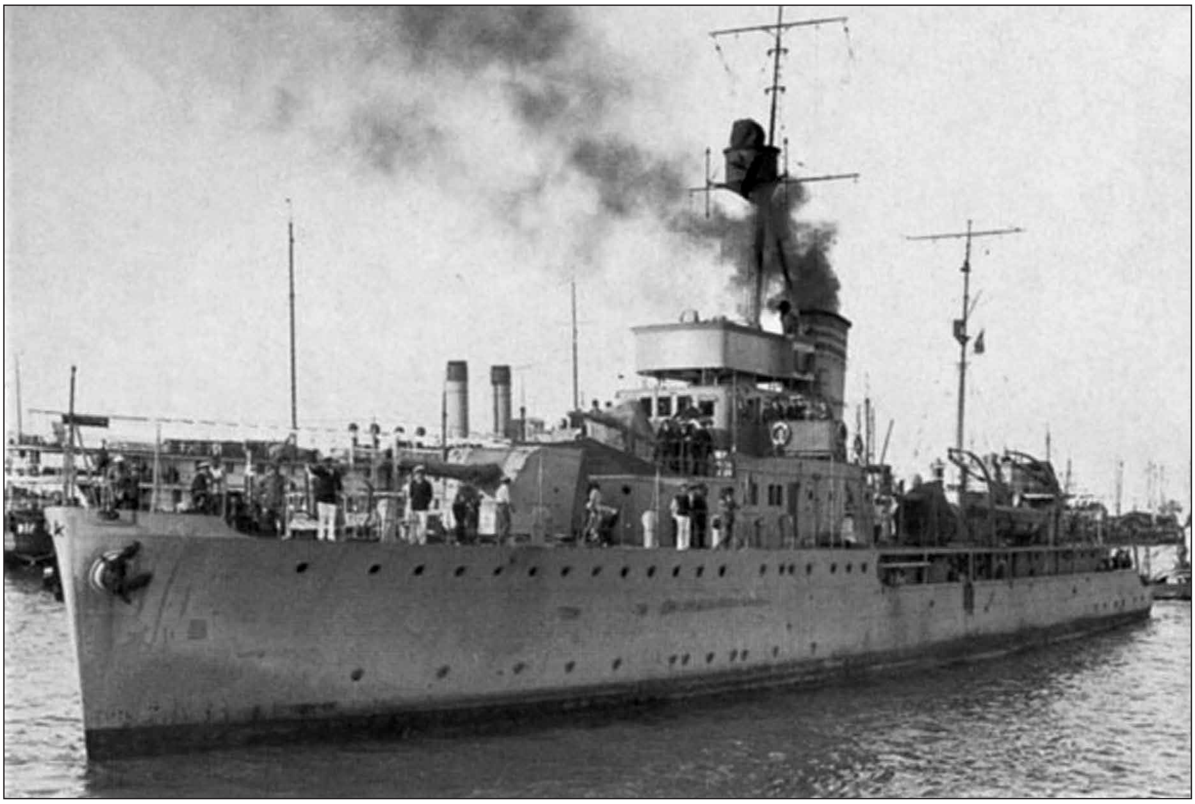
Transport aircraft types of the Paraguayan Air Arm, a Beechcraft UC-45F and a Douglas C-47, the latter of the Military Air Transport (TAM). (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)



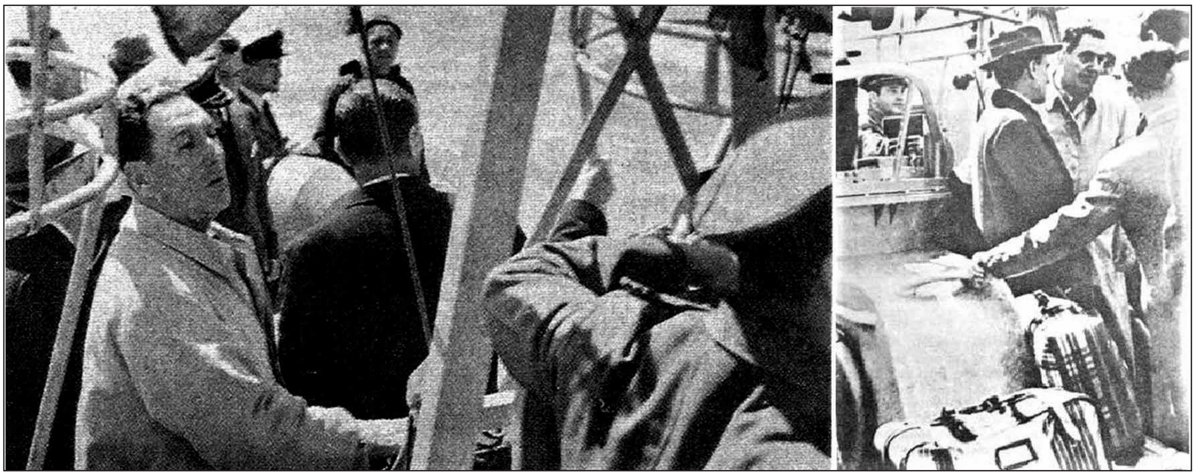
The then Paraguayan Air Arm owned two PBY-5A Catalina used jointly by the Military Air Transport (TAM) and *Líneas Aéreas de Transporte Nacional* (*LATN*). It also owned a pair of Bell 47G.2 helicopters. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)

Captain Enrique Noguera Isler, together with nine of his relatives had also requested asylum. The Secretary of the Embassy called the Ambassador Dr Juan Ramón Chaves, a prominent Paraguayan intellectual, university professor and senior leader of the Colorado Party, to inform him on this matter. She was ordered to lock the Embassy until his arrival. Chaves talked to Perón and convinced him that for his security, he should be taken to the Ambassador's residence at 2474 Virrey Loreto Street, in Belgrano neighbourhood, far from downtown. Once there, they discussed the best course of action. Dr Chaves would be a key figure in the negotiations with the

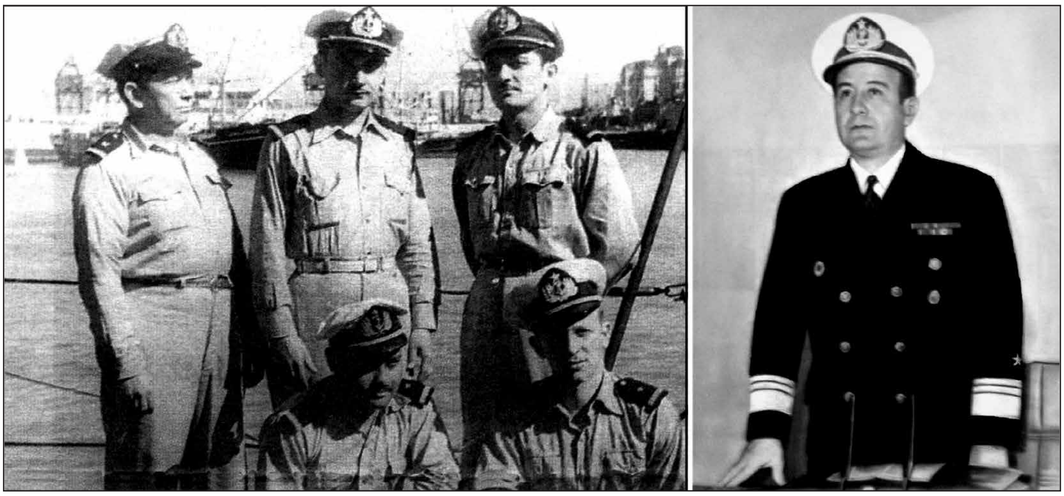
Building of the Paraguayan Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1955, at the time of writing, the Consulate of Paraguay (left). (Diario La Nación)
The then Paraguayan Ambassador in Argentina, Dr Juan Ramón Chaves (right). (Public Domain)



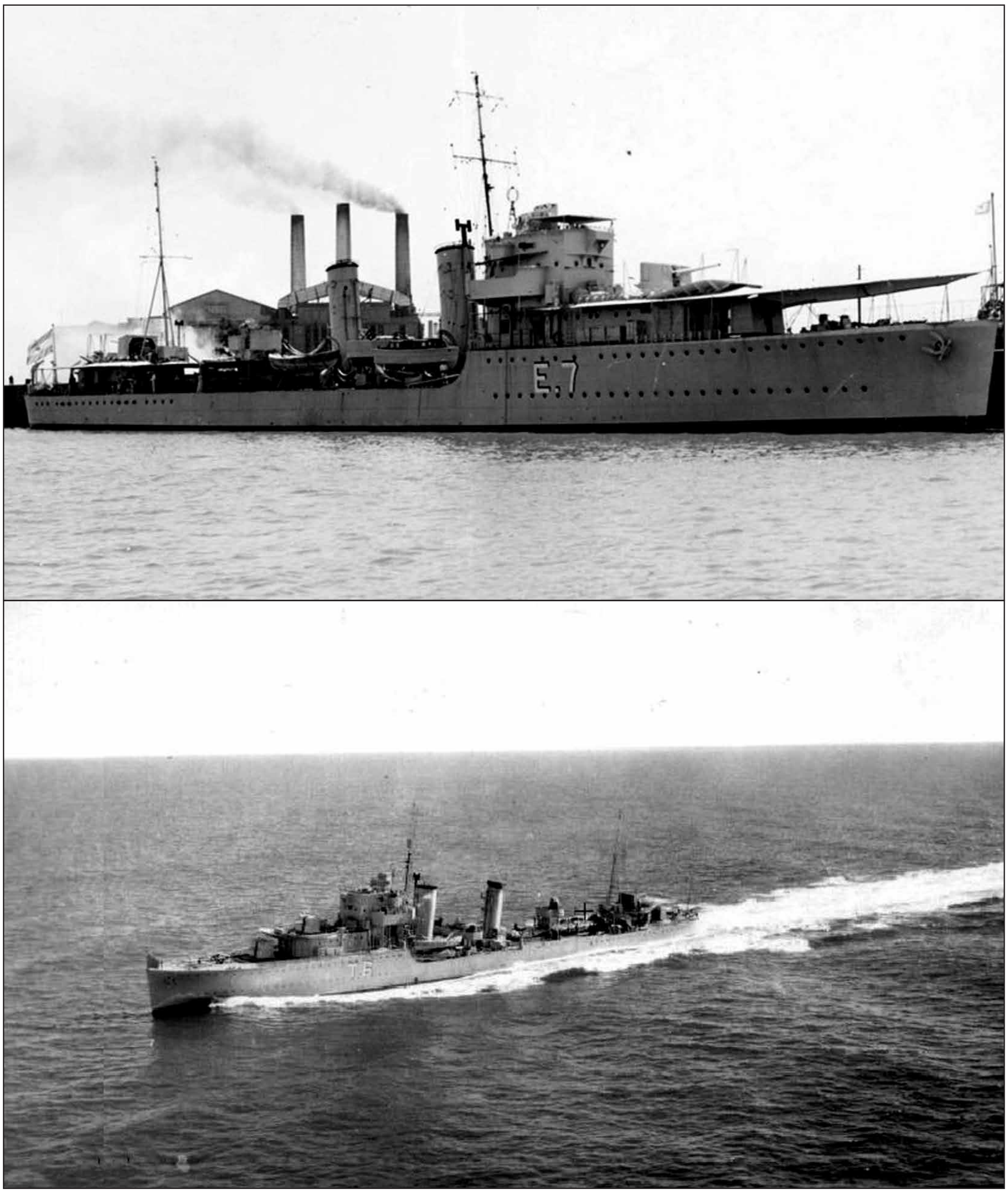
The gunboat C-1 *ARP Paraguay*, flagship of the Paraguayan Navy, in the port of Buenos Aires for repairs in 1955. (Armada Paraguaya)



Former President Perón the day he took refuge in the Paraguayan gunboat (left). The Paraguayan Ambassador in Argentina Dr Juan Ramón Chaves (at left) talking with former President Perón aboard the gunboat ARP *Paraguay* in the port of Buenos Aires (right). (*La Cañonera. Símbolo del Derecho de Asilo*, Augusto Ocampos Caballero) (Author's Collection)



The then Ship Lieutenant César Cortese (first from the left), Commander of the C-1 gunboat ARP *Paraguay*, on deck with his officers (left). César Cortese would have a long career in the Paraguayan Navy, becoming its commander with the rank of Vice Admiral between 1976 and 1987 (right). (Armada Paraguaya)

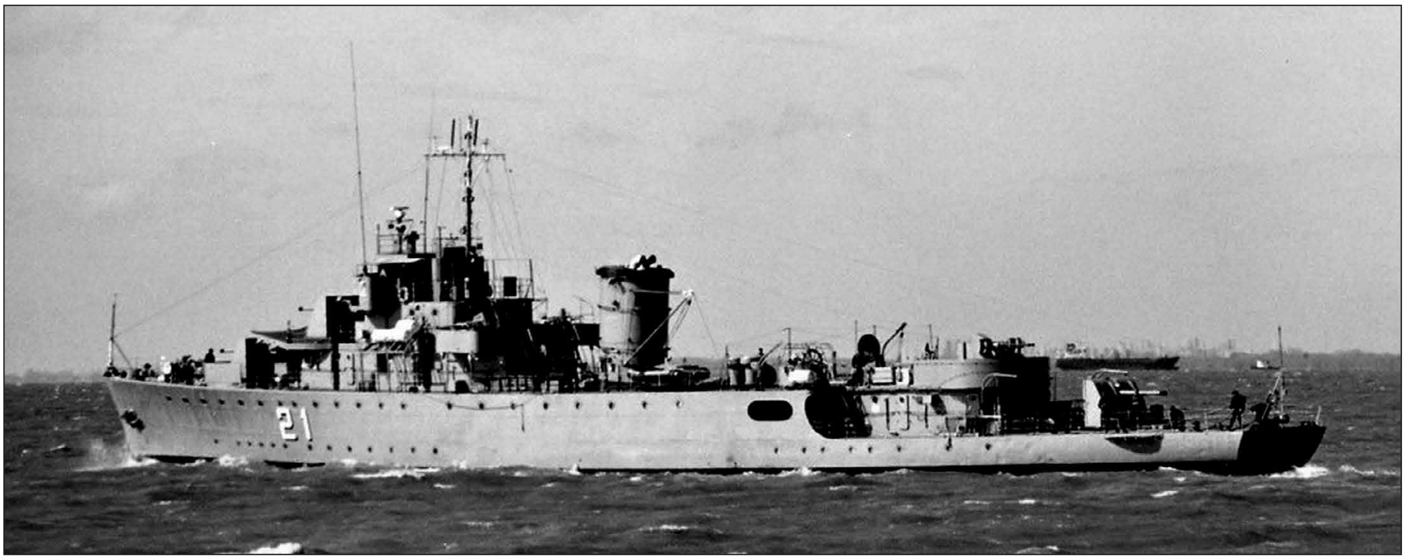


Two destroyers of the Argentine Navy, the T-7 ARA *Entre Ríos* (top) and the T-6 *Buenos Aires* (bottom), guarded the C-1 ARP *Paraguay* gunboat, both had orders to fire and sink ARA *Paraguay* if it moved. (Histarmar Archives)

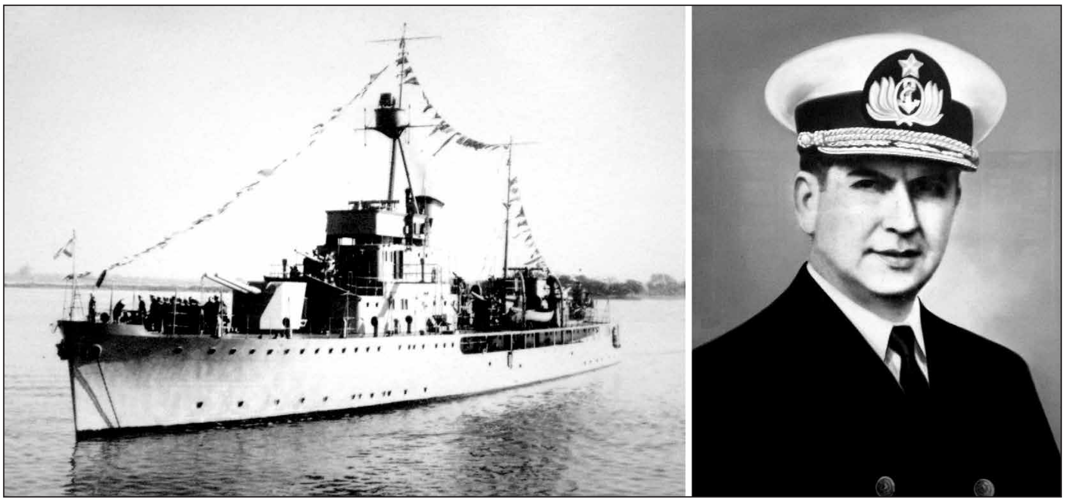
new revolutionary government for the departure of General Perón from Argentine territory.

As a distraction manoeuvre, to simulate the escape of the former President, Major Cialcetta asked the former Aeronautical Aide of Perón, Comodoro Villa, to prepare the presidential Douglas DC-4, serial T-42, of the Air Force in Aeroparque. Indeed, the aircraft actually took off and after an hour's flight landed at El Palomar Air Base where its crew, Commodore Lapuente and Commander Weiss were arrested. Perón and the highest authorities of the deposed government, according to the wishes of the senior revolutionary leaders, were to be arrested and tried for various crimes that they had committed, but the former President had another idea – to flee the country.

Immediately, and because of the lack of guarantees, it was decided to transfer General Perón to the Paraguayan Navy Gunboat C.1 *ARP Paraguay*, which was moored at Dock D of the port of Buenos Aires. This warship had arrived about 10 days earlier for a series of repairs. The transfer of Perón to the gunboat was made in a Mercedes Benz car of the Paraguayan Embassy. Perón travelled together with Ambassador Chaves and the Paraguayan military and naval attachés, who were armed for Perón's safety, as well as a driver. Although it was a rainy day, armed guards from the Argentine Navy tried to stop the car but the driver pointed out the Paraguayan flag and the diplomatic licence plates, but Ambassador Chaves had to show his documents so they were able to continue to the port. The small delegation was received by the then Ship Lieutenant César Cortese, Commander of the C.1 *ARP Paraguay*, with Perón staying in Cortese's own cabin. The same day, Ambassador Chaves and



The patrol boat P-21 ARA *King* was also guarding the gunboat C-1 ARP *Paraguay*. (Histarmar Archives)



The Paraguayan Navy Gunboat C-2 ARP *Humaitá*, which was sent to Buenos Aires to pick up Perón and bring him to Paraguay (left). Lieutenant Commander Benito Pereira Saguier (right). (Armada Paraguaya)

his military attaché, General Demetrio Cardozo, went to the Ministry of the Army to report that former President Perón had taken refuge on the Paraguayan Navy gunboat. They met with General José D. Molina, President of the Military Junta, who gave the pertinent guarantees.

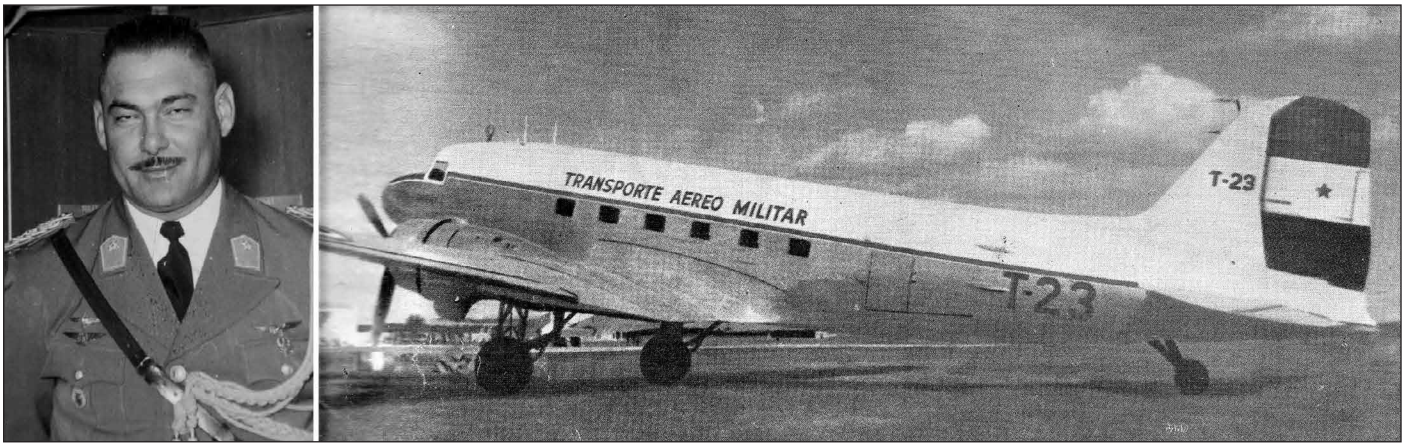
In the following days, Ambassador Chaves would insist through several notes to various revolutionary authorities, the granting of safe-conducts not only for Perón and companions, but also for those people who had taken refuge in the Paraguayan Embassy, so that they could travel to Asunción. In those notes, Chaves invoked the international laws on political asylum.

During those few days, Rear Admiral Rojas considered several possible ideas and plans to capture Perón. First, he sent Commander Jorge Palma to request Ambassador Chaves to hand over Perón; Chaves flatly refused. In view of this, Palma warned Chaves that the Paraguayan gunboat could not set sail from the port, the Ambassador clarifying that in fact it could not do so anyway, since it was undergoing repairs. However, Rojas ordered the destroyers ARA *Buenos Aires* and ARA *Entre Ríos* to keep a close watch on the Paraguayan gunboat. If ARA *Paraguay* set sail, warning shots were to be fired and if it still did not stop, there were orders to destroy and sink it. In addition to the destroyers, at least one PBY Catalina carried out air cover, and also had orders to bomb the Paraguayan gunboat if it left the port.

During General Perón's asylum on the Paraguayan gunboat, which would last exactly 12 days, there were moments of great tension, above all because of the threats from the new Argentine authorities and their followers to take C.1 ARP *Paraguay* by force to arrest the former President, directly sinking it with a torpedo or bombing it from the air, as well as 'psychological warfare' through radio broadcasts. On one occasion, a patrol boat from the Argentine Coast Guard, with several naval commandos, approached. The commandos tried to board the gunboat to kidnap the former President, but the Paraguayan crewmen aimed machine guns at them, threatening to shoot if they did not withdraw, the commandos finally gave up, leaving the ship. There was another plan of the Argentine Navy by which tactical divers would put explosive charges on the hull of the Paraguayan gunboat during the night, planning for them to explode and sink the ship with all its crew, and of course Perón. This plan was not carried out due to the intervention of General Lonardi himself. Ambassador Chaves learned of the plan when he met with the provisional President.

Another incident took place on Saturday 24 September, when a Captain of the Argentine Navy, sent by Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas, showed up at the Paraguayan gunboat to threaten Commander Cortese that if Perón continued to issue communications from that ship, the Argentine Navy would raid the Paraguayan ship by force, capturing all of the crew members and Perón himself. Ship Lieutenant Cortese stated categorically that the asylum seeker had not been in contact with anyone except the members of the ship crew and the Paraguayan diplomatic representatives.

During the entire stay of former President Perón on the Paraguayan gunboat, both the Paraguayan Embassy building and the residence of Ambassador Chaves were permanently 'guarded' by members of the Argentine Army and Police, and from time-to-time sympathisers of the new government would gather to shout slogans against Perón and his followers.



Paraguayan Air Arm Captain PAM Leo Nowak, pilot of the Military Air Transport (TAM), who would be Perón’s pilot on two flights. Douglas C-47 serial T-23, which was sent to the Buenos Aires Airport to pick up Perón. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)

Paraguayan Military Air Transport (TAM) Consolidated-Vultee PBY-5A Catalina, serial T-29, in the waters of the Rio de la Plata, waiting for Perón and his companions. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)

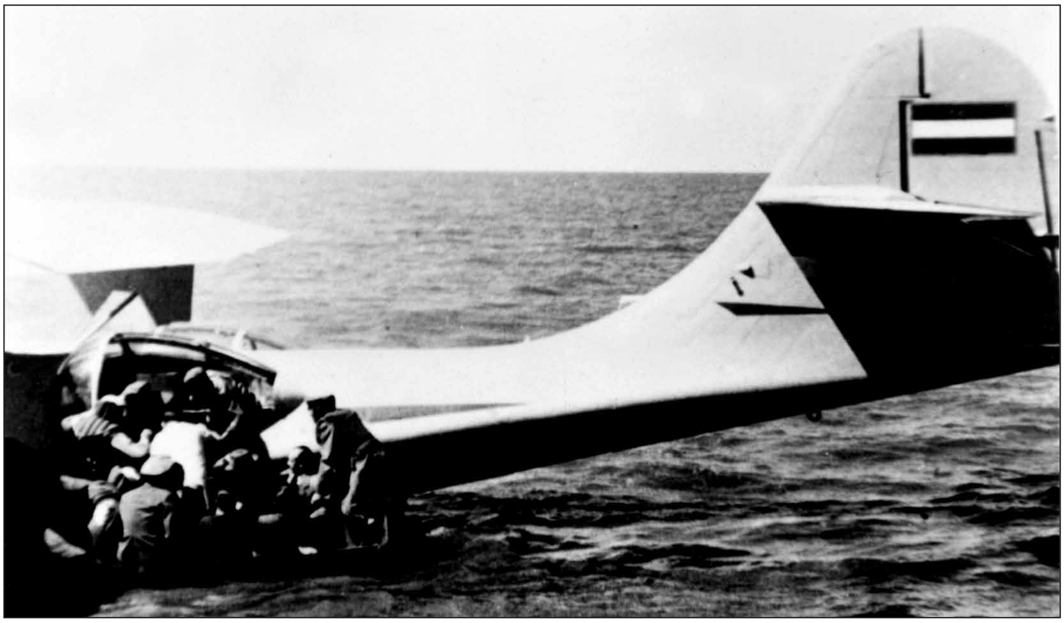
Argentine Navy Patrol Boat P-81, which transferred Perón and his companions from the gunboat ARP *Paraguay* to the PBY-5A Catalina. (Histarmar Archives)

On Sunday 25 September, a secret meeting was held between Ambassador Chaves and provisional President General Eduardo Lonardi in which an agreement was reached to remove the gunboat from the port using tugboats to avoid further diplomatic incidents. The same day, the decision was made to drop moorings and with the help of a tugboat, the ARP *Paraguay* (C.1) was removed from the dock where it was, heading through the navigation channel to its anchorage, about 10 kilometres from Buenos Aires, under the attentive gaze of revolutionary soldiers who pointed their weapons towards the Paraguayan ship. Additionally, the ARP *Paraguay* was closely watched by the patrol boats ARA *King* and ARA *Murature* of the Argentine Navy.

Because the gunboat ARP *Paraguay* could not move by its own means, it was impossible to get Perón out of Buenos Aires, so the Paraguayan government decided to send its twin, the gunboat ARP *Humaita*, both had performed gloriously in the Chaco War, to Buenos Aires. It left on the 21st, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Benito Pereira Saguier.

The new Argentine authorities did not agree to his transfer to the *Humaitá* gunboat, which had reached the Río de la Plata and anchored about two kilometres from *Paraguay.* They did not want Perón to be transferred by river, for fear of a counterrevolution. The only alternative was to do it by air, and thus the Paraguayan government sent a Douglas C-47 of the Military Air Transport (TAM) of the Air Force to Buenos Aires on 28 September. The C-47, commanded by Captain PAM (*Piloto Aviador Militar*, Military Aviator Pilot) Leo Nowak, landed at the Jorge Newbery Airport in downtown Buenos Aires and awaited instructions from the Paraguayan Embassy for the transfer of General Perón. The crew remained on the aircraft, which was guarded by armed Argentine Army soldiers, for several hours. The situation was complicated because a wide storm front entered on the 29th, which made any safe flight impossible, and additionally, there were not enough guarantees for the transfer of Perón from the gunboat *Paraguay*’ to the airport. Faced with this situation, and once the bad weather had dissipated, the Douglas had to return to Asunción without its important passenger.

The Paraguayan government, in view of the safe-conduct for Perón already granted by the new Argentine authorities, decided to remove the former Argentine President from his confinement on the *Paraguay* as soon as possible, for which the Consolidated-Vultee PBY-5A Catalina, serial number T-29, of the Paraguayan Air Arm was prepared for the rescue mission. The flight was scheduled for Sunday 2 October, as the weather had improved significantly. The flight crew was made up of Captain PAM Leo Nowak (pilot), Lieutenant PAM Ángel Souto (co-pilot), Sub-Lieutenant PAM Edgar Usher (second co-pilot), the mechanics NCO MAM (*Mecánico de Aviación Militar*, Military Aviation Mechanic) Escario, Díaz



Perón boarding the Paraguayan *PBY-5A Catalina* through one of the blisters. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)

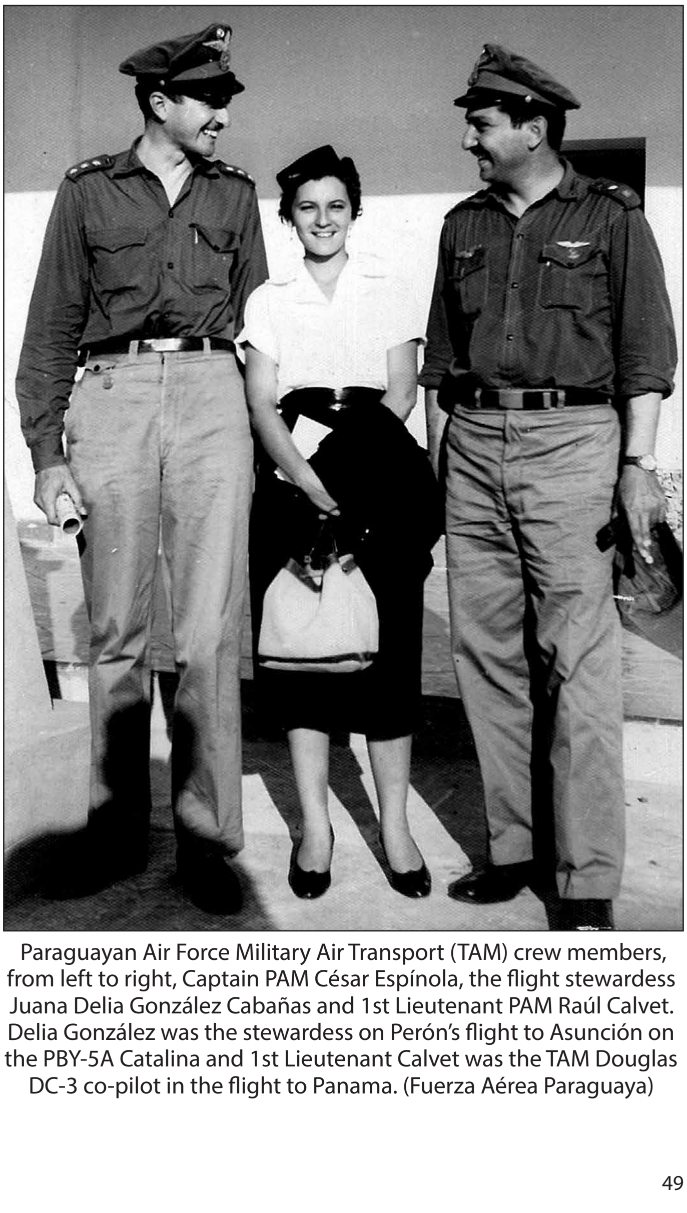
and Insfrán, the radio operators NCO José Moscarda and Marcial Quiñonez, and the stewardess Juana Delia González.

The Paraguayan Air Arm Commander, Colonel DEM (*De Estado Mayor*, Chief of Staff) Epifanio Ovando, accompanied the crew. The Catalina took off from Asunción International Airport for the Argentine Capital, at 5:40 in the morning. Around 11:30, Captain Nowak contacted the control tower of the Buenos Aires Airport to receive instructions for landing in the port of Buenos Aires. After making a few laps to recognise the situation and despite the fact that the Río de la Plata was quite 'choppy', the Catalina made the approach and landed successfully near kilometre 6 of the access channel to the port of Buenos Aires, remaining at a prudent distance from the gunboat C.1 ARP *Paraguay*, with the engines running.

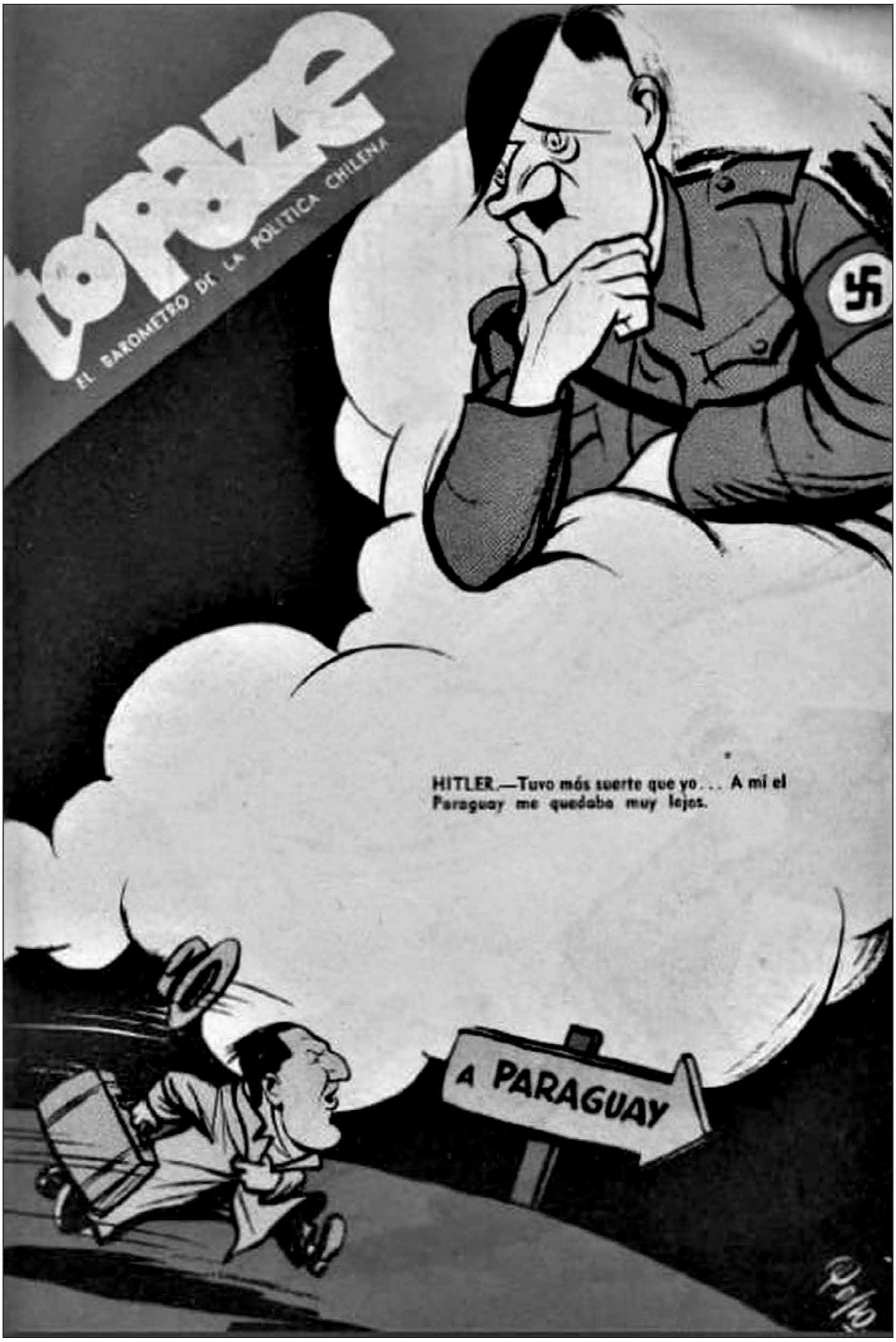
A patrol boat of the Argentine Navy, the P-81, which brought on board the Paraguayan Ambassador Chaves in the company of the Argentine Foreign Minister Dr Mario Amadeo, the Paraguayan military attachés and some high-ranking officers of the Argentine Navy, approached ARP *Paraguay.* Perón and his companions boarded the boat and approached the Catalina, but they had to be transferred to a smaller boat to be able to approach one of the amphibious

The P-81 could not approach the PBY-5A because the waters were very rough, so the passengers had to board a small boat to approach the Catalina. Perón is being helped by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lonardi's government, Mario Amadeo. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)

A smiling Perón with the *PBY-5A* pilot Captain PAM Leo Nowak, upon his arrival in Asunción. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)



Paraguayan Air Force Military Air Transport (TAM) crew members, from left to right, Captain PAM César Espínola, the flight stewardess Juana Delia González Cabañas and 1st Lieutenant PAM Raúl Calvet. Delia González was the stewardess on Perón's flight to Asunción on the PBY-5A Catalina and 1st Lieutenant Calvet was the TAM Douglas DC-3 co-pilot in the flight to Panama. (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)


Topaze
EL BAROMETRO DE LA POLITICA CHILENA
HITLER.—Tuvo más suerte que yo... A mí el Paraguay me quedaba muy lejos.
A PARAGUAY
Pepo

The Chilean magazine *Topaze*, in its edition of 23 September 1955, published this cartoon of the Chilean Cartoonist *Pepo* in which Perón is seen 'fleeing' to Paraguay. A concerned Hitler says, 'He was luckier than me ... Paraguay was far away for me.' (Topaze Magazine)

plane's blisters. When Perón got on board the Catalina he noticed that there were two heavy machine guns on board, and jokingly told a crew member, 'Son, cover them well, so as not to catch a cold with them' (making a reference to not fire them!). Besides Perón, Major Cialceta and the Argentine Navy Captain Horacio Barbita, Chief of the Naval Mission in Paraguay, Ambassador Chaves and General Cardozo also boarded the Catalina. Once all were on board and in their respective seats, the crew prepared for the takeoff, which was not an easy task because of the rough water; the takeoff race began at full power, but the Catalina refused to leave the turbulent waters. It was only on the third attempt, and after a long distance of almost two kilometres, that the T-29 finally took off – to the relief of the passengers and crew. It was 12:40 p.m.

Two Gloster Meteor F. Mk 4 jet interceptors of the Argentine Air Force escorted the Paraguayan Catalina to Reconquista, where they landed and two others took off, which were in charge of the escort to the Paraguayan border. Although all the guarantees had been given in order that former President Perón could leave Argentina on the Catalina, the Meteors of the Argentine Air Force were armed, with the order not to allow the Paraguayan aircraft to land in Argentine territory and if that were to be about to happen, it had to be shot down. During the flight, General Perón was relieved and talkative; all the previous tension had dissipated. When the PBY-5A entered Paraguayan airspace, a TAM DC-3 came out to escort it to the Ñu-Guazú air base, where it would land. The Dakota was co-piloted by the President of Paraguay himself, General Alfredo Stroessner, who was a certified C-47 pilot. The landing took place at 5:40 in the afternoon at Ñu-Guazú air base, to avoid the press, which had crowded into the Asunción International Airport. Perón was received by the Paraguayan Minister of the Interior, Architect Tomás Romero Pereira, and the Chief of Police Lieutenant-Colonel Mario Ortega. From the air base, the former Argentine President was transferred to the residence of Ricardo Gayol, an Argentine businessman living in Asunción, where he stayed. The house was (and still is) on Padre Cardozo Street and España Avenue, in Las Mercedes neighbourhood of the Paraguayan Capital city.

A few days after his arrival in Paraguay, General Perón made some statements to the *United Press* agency, revealing that, 'The causes of the coup were solely political. It had been an oligarchic-

The house of the Argentine businessman Ricardo Gayol, in Las Mercedes neighbourhood in Asunción, where Perón was lodged. (Author's collection)

Country house of the leader of the Colorado Party Rigoberto Caballero in the city of Villarrica, where Perón stayed for a few weeks in October 1955. (*El Asilo de Perón* by Alfredo Seiferheld and José Luis De Tone)

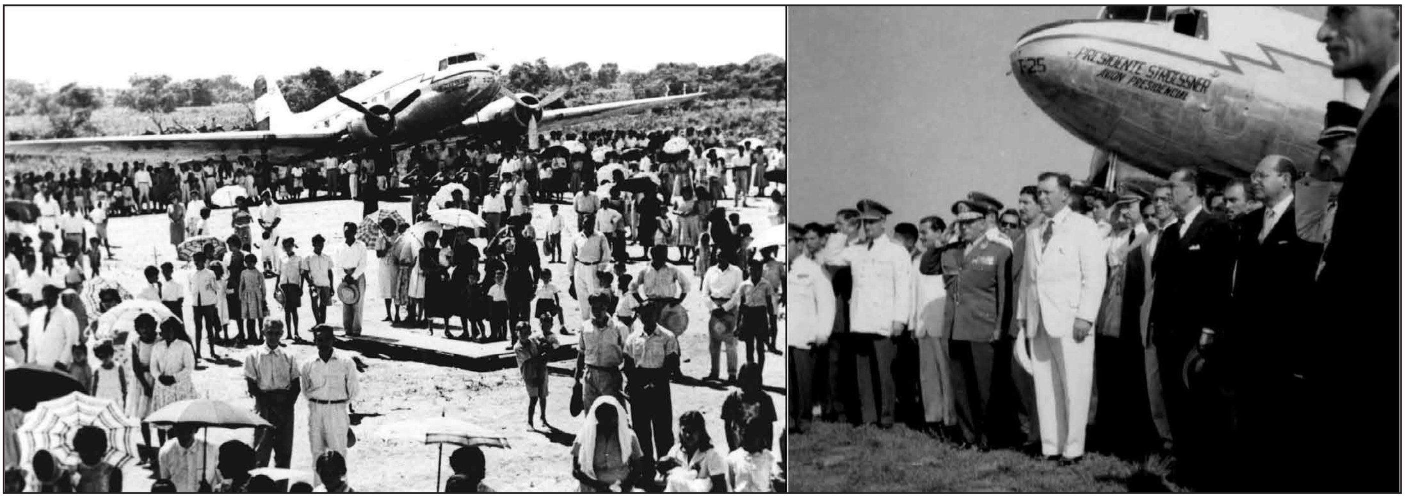
Perón getting ready to start the press conference at his friend Ricardo Gayol's house. Correspondents from the world's leading news agencies attended. *(UPI)*

clerical reaction to enthrone the outdated conservatism driven by ambition and money,' which caused a diplomatic incident with Argentina.

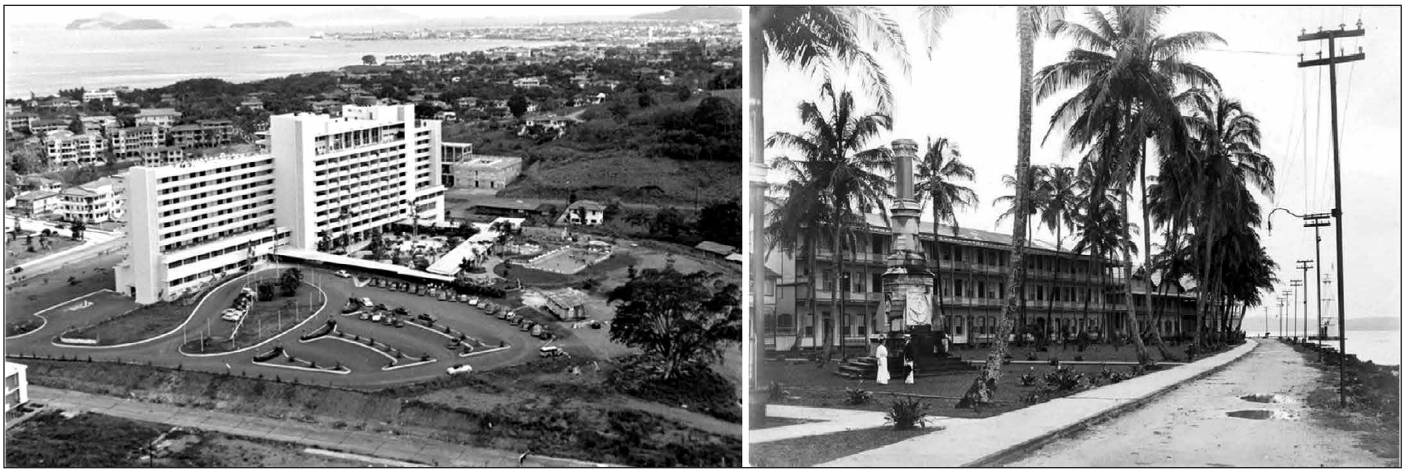
The Argentine government requested that the former President be sent far from the borders and as a result, Perón was transferred by car to the city of Villarrica, about 170 kilometres from Asunción, staying in the country house of Mr Rigoberto Caballero, a Colorado Party leader, where he spent the rest of his exile in Paraguay. Even while in Villarrica, Perón was not exempt from dangers, and in fact, the Paraguayan police captured eight Argentine individuals who were prowling the area of Perón's residence, suspected of being agents of Rear Admiral Rojas and whose mission was to assassinate the former Argentine President.

In the short time that he remained in Paraguay, General Perón devoted himself primarily to finishing writing his book *La Fuerza es el Derecho de las Bestias* (Force Is the Law of Beasts), while the pressures of the new Argentine government continued in order to get him sent outside Paraguay. Perón himself feared for his life and his presence in Paraguay made the normalisation of his host country's relations with his home country very difficult.

Thus, on his own initiative and under the advice of his close allies, General Perón decided to leave Paraguay, a decision that was communicated to the government of President Stroessner, who ordered the Air Force to organise Perón's transfer by air to a



Douglas DC-3A serial T-25 of the Military Air Transport (TAM) was the presidential plane of General Alfredo Stroessner and was used to transport Perón and his companions to Panama in November 1955 (left). (Fuerza Aérea Paraguaya)
Presidents Alfredo Stroessner (Paraguay) and Juscelino Kubitschek (Brazil) met in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, in 1959. They were both standing with members of their delegations in front of the Military Air Transport Douglas DC-3A serial T-25 (right). (FGV Archives)



Hotels where Perón stayed at during the first weeks of his exile in Panama. Hotel El Panamá of Panamá City (left). (Panamá La Vieja Escuela) Hotel Washington of Colón (right). (Panama Canal Museum Collection/University of Florida)

place that the former Argentine President ordered it to. The original destination chosen by Perón was Managua, Nicaragua, but he would end up in Panamá City.

As Perón did not have Argentine documentation for the trip, the Paraguayan government quickly provided him with a Paraguayan passport. In fact, in 1954, Perón had already received from President Stroessner not only honorary Paraguayan citizenship but also the rank of General *Honoris Causa* of the Paraguayan Army.

On 1 November, Perón travelled to Asunción with all his few belongings and said goodbye to President Stroessner, thanking him for all the attention and care he had received. The Paraguayan Air Force had prepared the Douglas DC-3A serial number T-25, the one used by President Stroessner for his trips, for the long journey to Nicaragua. The crew was made up of Captain PAM Leo Nowak (pilot), 1st Lieutenant PAM Raúl E. Calvet (co-pilot), NCO MAM José Moscarda (mechanic/flight engineer), and Ms. Librada Ramírez (stewardess).

At least two routes to Managua were considered; the first would be via Lima, but finally the decision was made to do so via Brazil and Venezuela. General Perón was accompanied by Victor Radeglia, his private secretary.

TAM DC-3 serial T-25 left the Asunción International Airport on 2 November at 4:00 in the morning en route to Brazil. In the section between Foz do Iguaçu and São Paulo they encountered bad weather and the flight was very bumpy, and they had to fly by instruments for four hours. They made a stopover in São Paulo and then in Rio de Janeiro, where they refuelled and continued to the Ipitanga air base, about 20 kilometres from Salvador, where they arrived in the late afternoon, spending the night at that base. The next day they would fly to São Luis. An alternative route had been planned from São Luis, passing through Belem do Pará, Georgetown, Caracas and from there, to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, then flying to Panamá City and finally to Managua, Nicaragua. This alternative route was discarded for a more direct one, which is the one that was finally used. This was done to mislead possible attempts on the life of Perón.

The next day, they took off again very early, heading to São Luís de Maranão, where they made a stopover, to then continue to Macapá, in the State of Amapá, located in the delta of the Amazon River. The flight passed smoothly and General Perón devoted himself almost exclusively to reviewing the draft of his book, being treated deferentially by the crew members, especially by Miss Librada Ramírez, who in 1957 would become the first official flight attendant in Paraguay, working in Military Air Transport. Well into the afternoon, it was decided to spend the night in Macapá.

Perón would meet his third wife, the Argentine dancer María Estela Martínez alias 'Isabel' in Panama. In the photo, former President Perón with Isabel (left) when she started working as his secretary.(Public Domain)

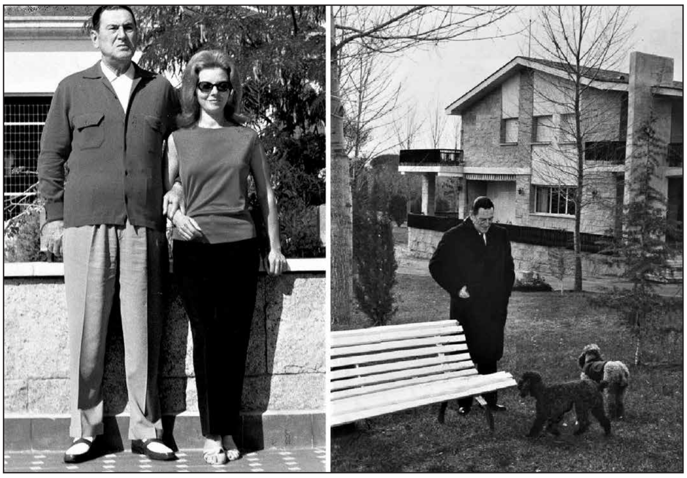
On 4 November, T-25 with its crew and passengers left Macapá bound for Paramaribo, in what was then the Dutch Guyana (present Surinam), where it refuelled, continuing to Caracas, Venezuela, where it arrived at 4:10 p.m. The original intention was to continue the trip to Panama the next day, but a series of technical problems with the DC-3's engines prevented it. Fortunately, the problems would be solved on the afternoon of the 5th.

On the 6th when it was not yet dawn, the T-25 took off from Caracas to Panamá City, landing at Tocúmen Airport at 9:00 in the morning, after a smooth flight. The crew and passengers stayed at the luxurious Hotel *El Panamá* for two days, while the procedures to enter Nicaragua were sorted, but Perón felt truly comfortable in Panama, so he delayed his trip to Nicaragua for a while. Meanwhile, the delegation moved to a cheaper hotel, the Hotel *Washington* in Colón, because the bill at *El Panama* had reached about 600 dollars in just two days, a figure which was entirely paid by the Panamanian Government.

In view of the postponement of the trip to Nicaragua, the crew of the T-25 was released and finally returned to Paraguay on 10 November. Captain PAM Leo Nowak was later promoted to Major and would die in an aircraft accident aboard a PBY-5A Catalina on the Paraguay River next to Asunción in 1957. 1st Lieutenant PAM Raúl Calvet would have a long career in the Paraguayan Air Force reaching the rank of Major-General in 1988. After flying in TAM for some years, he was commissioned to *Líneas Aéreas Paraguayas* in 1963. At the time of writing, he was still alive.

Perón would live in Panama for nine months but then he had to leave that country because a Pan-American conference was to be held with the assistance of U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower there. Perón spent a few days in Nicaragua, where he was received by President Anastasio Somoza García. He then returned to Panama and met what would be his third wife, an Argentine dancer named María Estela Martínez, whose stage name was *Isabel.* Soon, they were living together, Isabel acting as Perón's secretary.

On 9 August 1956, upon his arrival in Caracas, Perón was greeted effusively by General Raúl Tanco, one of the leaders of the frustrated uprising led by General Juan José Valle in June that year. (Public Domain)



Perón and Isabel, in Madrid, Spain in the 1960s. One of the few photos in which Perón does not wear his traditional smile (left). (*Vanity Fair*)
Perón in the yard of his country house called '17 de Octubre' in Madrid, with his poodles (right). (Diario ABC Archives)

On 9 August 1956 Perón and Isabel travelled to Venezuela, then ruled by the dictator General Marcos Pérez Jiménez. During his stay in Caracas, Perón enjoyed official protection from the National Security Directorate. However, after the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez on 23 January 1958, Perón had to take refuge in the Embassy of the Dominican Republic and from there he left for that country, where he was received by the dictator *Generalísimo* Rafael Leónidas Trujillo.

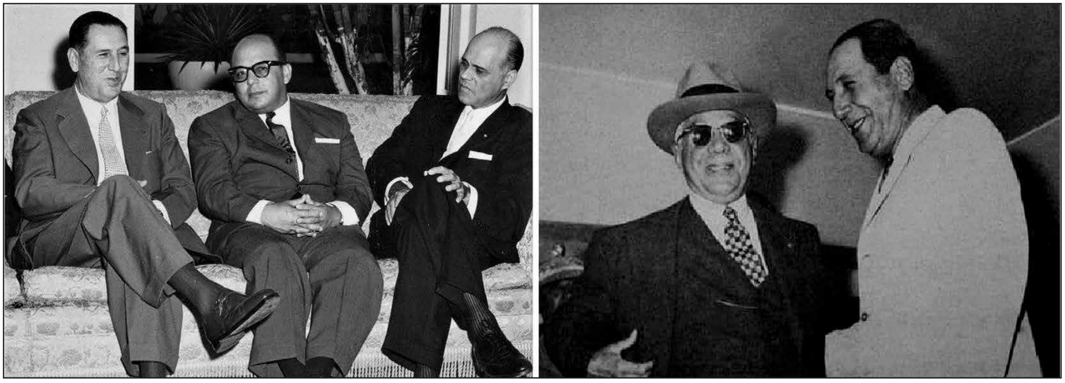
In 1957, as part of his strategy to retake power, Perón declared that all the assets of the 'oligarchs and gorillas' who had deposed him would be handed over to the people. He went even further by saying that those who took a house from the oligarchs and arrested or executed its owners would be able to keep it, those who took a ranch would keep everything. NCOs and soldiers who killed their commanders and officers would take charge of their units, assuming command of them. This was his secret plan and with it, he laid the foundations for the 'dirty war' that broke out in the early 1970s, with various terrorist actions by radicalised leftist guerrilla groups, which caused numerous deaths among the military, police, judges, businessmen and politicians. Perón praised these actions and described these terrorists as 'wonderful youth' and even sent a wreath of flowers to the funerals of the dead guerrillas. The repression by the government of that time was harsh and very justified in order to bring order to the country, especially after the March 1976 coup.

Perón and Isabel moved from the Dominican Republic to Spain on a chartered VARIG Lockheed L.1049G Super Constellation, and arrived in Seville on 26 January 1960. After several weeks, they finally settled in Madrid. On 15 November 1961, the civil and religious union of Perón with Isabel was formalised, Perón was then 66 and Isabel was aged 30, since in Franco's ultra-Catholic Spain, their concubinage was much frowned upon. Perón also wanted to make peace with the Catholic Church so he asked the Vatican to absolve him from that decree of excommunication of 1955; the request was granted to him by Pope John XXIII in 1963.

Since his exile in 1955, Perón had never abandoned the idea of returning to Argentina and even of being President again. From exile in Paraguay, Panama, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Spain, he continued leading the Peronists in Argentina and preparing for his triumphant return.

Between March and April 1964, Perón met Ernesto 'Che' Guevara at his home in Madrid. The meeting was kept as the greatest of secrets at the time. Che gave Perón funds to support the operation of the return to Argentina that he was preparing. At the meeting, Perón committed to support guerrilla initiatives against Latin American dictatorships, which he effectively did until 1973.

On 2 December 1964, during the government of Arturo Illia, Perón tried to return by plane to Argentina, aboard an Iberia Douglas DC-8, but the government confirmed the decision taken by the 1955 presidency to prohibit his residence in the country. The Argentine presidency asked the military government led by President Castelo Branco in power in Brazil at the time not to allow Perón and companions to continue to Buenos Aires. The military seized the jet straight after its landing at Galeão International Airport in Rio de Janeiro, and Perón and his entourage had to disembark, remaining in the



Perón met with two dictators of the time, General Marcos Pérez Jiménez of Venezuela (left) and General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo of the Dominican Republic (right). (Public Domain)

Perón (third from the right) and his entourage, Vandor, Delia Parodi, Andrés Framini, Lascano and Jorge Antonio, descending from the DC-8-52 EC-ARA Velázquez of Iberia in Rio de Janeiro on 3 December 1964. They could not continue the trip to Buenos Aires and had to return to Spain on the same plane. (UPI)

custody of Brazilian Army troops at the Officers' Club at the airport for 15 hours. The Iberia flight proceeded to Montevideo and Buenos Aires without the Argentines, and upon returning to Rio, Perón and his entourage were 'cordially invited' to board the DC-8 whose destination was again Madrid.

After the government installed in 1955 and especially after the one that came to power in 1966, which abolished political parties, several armed groups appeared in Argentina with the objective of fighting the dictatorship and insurrections took place in various parts of the country, the best known was the *Cordobazo*. Most of these armed groups adhered to Peronism, such as *Montoneros*, the Marxist-Peronist *FAR* (Revolutionary Armed Forces), the *FAP* (Peronist Armed Forces) and the *FAL* (Argentine Liberation Forces).

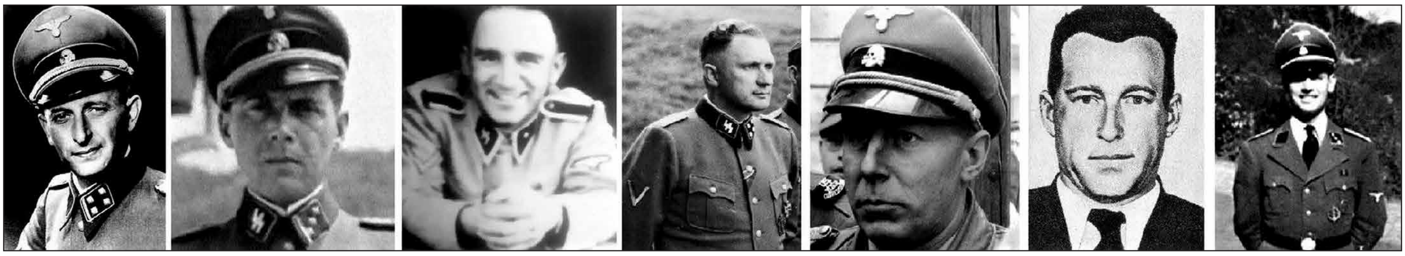
A few months after the Onganía government was installed, between September and October 1966, Perón met Che Guevara in Madrid for the second time, and Guevara asked Perón for support for his guerrilla project in Bolivia. Perón promised not to prevent those Peronists who wanted to accompany Guevara from doing so, but did not agree to involve the Peronist movement as such in a guerrilla action in Bolivia, although he did compromise the support of Peronism when Che's guerrilla movement moved its actions to the Argentine territory. When Perón learned of the execution of 'Che' in Bolivia in 1967 he emphatically expressed his feelings, 'His death tears my soul because he was one of us, perhaps the best.'

Perón publicly supported revolutionary Peronism and its guerrilla organisations – which he called 'special formations' – and justified the armed struggle against the dictatorship. Even without having uttered it verbatim, one of the best known phrases attributed to Perón was, 'Violence from above begets violence from below.' He also developed a 'political and doctrinal update' of Peronism, adapting it to the Third World revolutionary struggles that were taking place at that time, defining the Peronism of the 1970s as a left national socialism, a quite great ideological change from someone who in the 1940s admired Adolf Hitler's Nazi ideology, with an Argentine Army moulded after the German model and even wearing the same uniform and helmet, and on top of that, giving political asylum to many former Nazi leaders, some of them known war criminals, such as Adolph Eichmann, Josef Mengele, Walter Rauff, Franz Stangl, Josef Schwammberger, Erich Priebke and Gerhard Bohne.

Perón was always a skilful manipulator and although he hated violence, he used all means to combat those who had thrown him out of power, and even against his political convictions, he did not hesitate to support a radical and violent left, which would later escape from his control. So at the time Peronism had a right-wing faction, represented by the traditional leaders and the CGT, and a left-wing faction, led by the Peronist Youth, both very antagonistic, who would commit political assassinations among themselves.

In 1970, Perón told the press in Spain that the coup of 1955 had been orchestrated by the United States, a highly misleading statement, since his government was just about to conclude an oil agreement with Washington. He also praised Castro's communist Cuba, saying that if the Soviets had supported the Peronists in 1955, he would have been the 'first Fidel Castro' on the Continent. He said that if he had decided to resist then, he would surely have won and then he would have had to shoot at least half a million Argentines. Incredibly at that time, Perón also blamed his most loyal military comrades for his operational inefficiency and the CGT union leaders themselves, who had promised a great deal and even wanted to give their lives for the regime, but did absolutely nothing during the events of September 1955, so that everyone was guilty except for him.

Among the most prominent actions of the Peronist guerrilla, the *Montoneros* group, was the assassination of the former President, General (Retired) Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, a key figure in the coup against Perón in 1955, on 1 June 1970, after he was kidnapped.


Some of the Nazi war criminals who obtained refuge in Argentina during the Perón administration: From left to right, former *Obersturmbannführer* Adolf Eichmann, *Hauptsturmführer* Josef Mengele, *SS-Kommandant* Josef Schwammberger, *Hauptsturmführer* Gerard Bohne, *Standartenführer* Walter Rauff, *Hauptsturmführer* Franz Stangl, and *Hauptsturmführer* Erich Priebke. (Public Domain)

General Aramburu's Vice President, Rear Admiral Isaac Rojas, retired in 1958 and was promoted to the rank of Admiral. He was nicknamed 'Black Ant' because he was very thin and wore large glasses. He died on 12 April 1993 at the age of 86. He had asked that, upon his death, his ashes be scattered over the Argentine sea in the place where the heavy cruiser ARA *General Belgrano* was sunk during the Falklands War.

5

THE RETURN OF PERÓN AND THE *GRAND FINALE*?

Perón returned to Argentina, for a brief visit, on 17 November 1972 aboard an Alitalia DC-8, using a Paraguayan passport. The government of General Lanusse did not oppose this visit and after spending a few hours at the Ezeiza Airport Hotel, Perón went to a house that he had acquired in the town of Vicente López, in Buenos Aires Province. His countless followers began to appear at his home and the conductor spoke to them from time-to-time. Perón was no longer the same man as before, he was old and sick, he spoke very slowly and his life was directed by Isabel and her secretary José López Rega, an obscure character who had gained Isabel's confidence. He met not only with Peronist leaders but also with the opposition, such as the radical leader Ricardo Balbín. In December, the *FREJULI* (Justicialist Liberation Front) was formed that would represent Peronism in the general elections, and before leaving Argentina, he chose Dr Héctor Cámpora for the presidential candidacy. Perón travelled first to Paraguay and then to Peru, before again returning to Spain.

On 11 March 1973, Argentina held general elections. Héctor José Cámpora, with the approval of Perón in exile, won the elections with 49.56 percent of the votes against the radical candidate Ricardo Balbín who received just 21.29 percent.

Juan Domingo Perón returned definitively to Argentina on 20 June 1973 aboard an Aerolíneas Argentinas Boeing 707-387B. One of the crew members was Ernesto Adradás, who on 16 June 1955, while flying an Argentine Air Force Meteor F.Mk 4 loyal to the government, shot down a rebel Naval Aviation T-6. While Perón and his delegation were still flying, hundreds of thousands of his followers were gathering near Ezeiza International Airport. Peronists from both factions were there and provoked each other and as weapons were being carried, shots soon broke out and many were killed and wounded. The violence generated in the area caused President Cámpora, who was on board Perón's flight, to order the pilot not to land in Ezeiza but at the Morón Military air base, for security reasons. It is not known how many people lost their lives at Ezeiza Airport but it is estimated that there were several hundreds. From that moment on, Perón would harshly criticise his followers on the left, but it was a monster that he had himself created and had to deal with that.

As stated before, Perón was already seriously ill. An incipient prostate cancer, polyps, emphysema and kidney failure were some of the complicated health conditions he was suffering from. His doctors, aware of the situation, assembled a team made up of professionals from different specialties, who took turns in rotating guard both in his house in Vicente López first, and then in the presidential residence of Olivos, when Perón acceded to the first magistracy.

Cámpora resigned on 13 July, leaving the way clear

Alitali
Alita

Details of Perón's first return to Argentina on 17 November 1972 aboard Alitalia's DC-8-62H, carrying the registration I-DIWN and nicknamed *Giuseppe Verdi*.(Public domain) for Perón to run in the new elections, which took place on 23 September that year. His rank of Lieutenant-General was restored and he could once again wear the military uniform as an active officer. Perón, of the Justicialist Party, won with 61.85 percent of the votes against the Civic Radical Union (*UCR*) candidate Ricardo Balbín, with only 24.42 percent of the votes. The other candidates were Francisco Manrique of the Federal Party (*PF*), a former Naval officer who had participated in the 1955 coup against Perón and was part of Lonardi's government (he received 12.19 percent of the votes) and Juan Carlos Coral of the Workers Socialist Party (*PST*) who took a mere 1.54 percent of the votes. Perón became President for the third time on 12 October with his wife, María Estela Martínez de Perón, as Vice President, something that he could not do with Eva Perón in 1952 in his second presidency. On the day Perón took office, Argentina was surrounded by dictatorships (Pinochet in Chile, Banzer in Bolivia, Stroessner in Paraguay, Medici in Brazil and Bordaberry in Uruguay), which all had strong support from the West.

Perón's first major health crisis occurred on 18 November 1973, when he was saved from acute lung oedema. Although the cardiologist had asked him to avoid violent emotions, he felt the impact of the People's Revolutionary Army (*ERP*) attack on the Azul military garrison on 19 January 1974, to such an extent that in the official ceremonies of the following days, as a gesture of solidarity, he appeared dressed in his military uniform. During the commemorations of 1 May, from the balconies of the Government House he maintained an acid counterpoint that would be the definitive break with Montoneros. 'What's up, what's

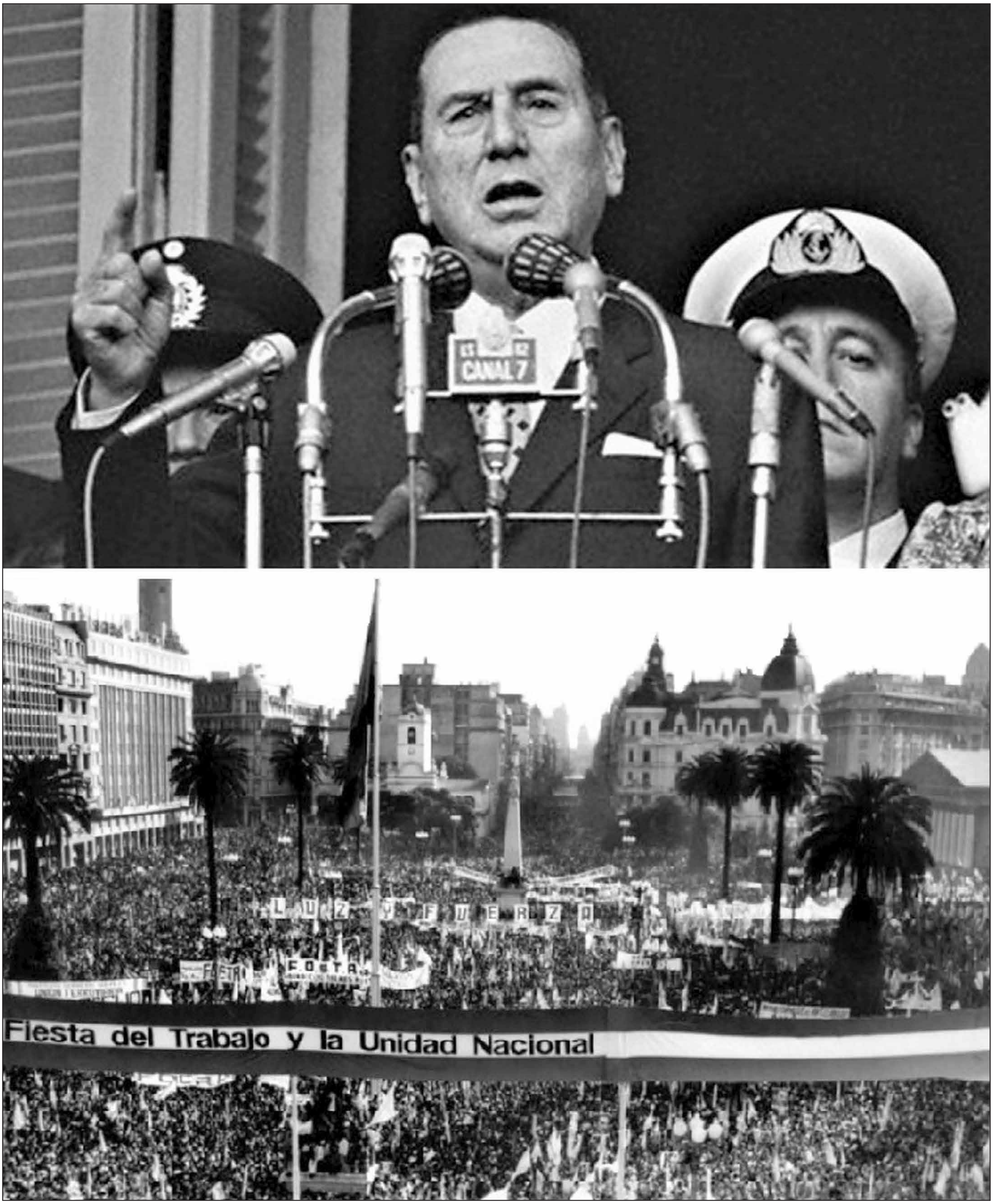
Dr Héctor José Cámpora's government lasted just 49 days, from 25 May to 13 July 1973, when he resigned for new elections that Perón would eventually win. (Archivo General de la Nación)

AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS

The President of Argentina, Dr Héctor José Cámpora, with Juan Domingo Perón aboard the Aerolíneas Argentinas Boeing 707 on the flight to Buenos Aires, 20 June 1973. Behind them, their wives, Georgina Acevedo and María Estela Martínez de Perón (left).(Diario Clarín) Perón and Cámpora being received by Air Force officers at Morón Airport (right). (Public Domain)

Perón's house at 1065 Gaspar Campos Street, Vicente López, in Buenos Aires Province (left). Perón and Isabel greeting their followers from the second floor of their house in November 1972)right). (Public Domain)

Perón became President for the third time on 12 October 1973, with his wife María Estela Martínez de Perón as Vice President.(Archivo General de la Nación)


CANAL 7
LUZ Y FUERZA
Fiesta del Trabajo y la Unidad Nacional

The President, Lieutenant-General Juan Domingo Perón, at the speech of 1 May 1974. A large crowd heard him on the occasion. (Archivo General de la Nación)

up General, the popular government is full of gorillas,' the left-wing militants sang. Perón, referring to the support of the trade union organisations, replied: 'Today it turns out that some beardless people claim to have more merit than those who fought for 20 years.' The Montoneros ended up leaving the plaza. Perhaps that explains why the old general had a pistol on his bedside table and, next to his bed, a long gun. He lost control of the extremist left that he himself had formed years before. It was no longer 'wonderful youth' but 'stupid beardless youth.' He had created a monster and then it was very

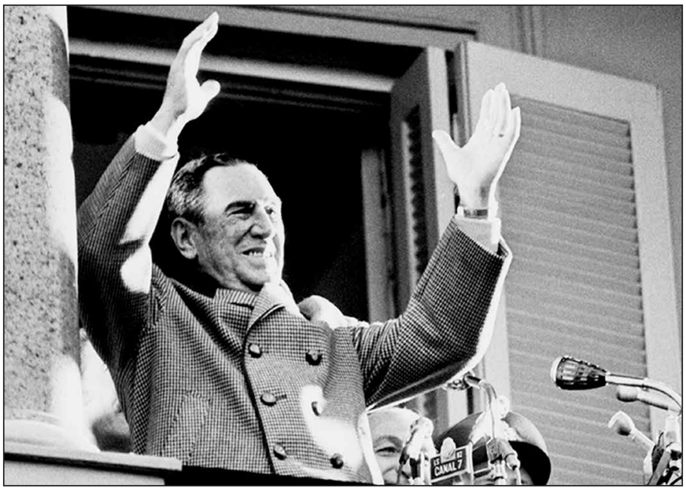
Perón on his last state visit to Paraguay in June 1974, when he met with President Stroessner. (Public domain)

The second aircraft carrier of the Argentine Navy was the ARA *25 de Mayo* (hull number V-2; former HMS *Venerable*, hull number R96 of the Royal Navy, then HMNS *Karel Doorman* of the Royal Netherlands Navy).(Histarmar Archives)

difficult for him to control it. After his death, his wife was even less capable and that precipitated subsequent events.

Like his previous government, its administrative management was unfortunate. There was a shortage of everything in the market, and even basic necessities had very high prices, which caused a general discontent, not only in the opposition, but in his own supporters and, needless to say, within the Armed Forces.

However, Perón did not have long to live, and two events further contributed to undermining his health. The first was on 17 May, when he made an inspection visit to the Navy Sea Fleet, aboard the aircraft carrier V-2 ARA *Veinticinco de Mayo,* where he was exposed to low temperatures. And the second was the trip he made to Paraguay on 6 June, in order to smooth things over in the negotiations that both countries were holding for the construction of the *Yacyretá* hydroelectric dam. Perón arrived in that country aboard the Argentine Navy Minesweeper ARA *Neuquén* (M-1), while the gunboat *Paraguay* that had taken him into exile in 1955,



The last public appearance of President Perón, on 12th June 1974. He died 19 days later. (Archivo General de la Nación)

The Funeral of President Perón. His widow, already President of Argentina, is in the middle of the photo with full black mourning clothes (left). (Diario la Nación).
Perón's grave in the family's crypt at *La Chacarita* Cemetery in Buenos Aires (right). (F. C. Giorgio)

greeted him with 21 a gun salute. He was also greeted by a large crowd, as he endured low temperatures and a persistent drizzle. He also wanted to thank President Stroessner for the welcome received during his exile in 1955. All of this exposure to rain and cold worsened his fragile health. He returned to Buenos Aires on the Argentine Air Force Fokker F.28 presidential jet.

The last public appearance of President Perón was on 12 June 1974, 19 days before his death. Wearing the famous grey overcoat with black lapels, he had an increasingly weak heart, he appeared on the balcony of the Casa Rosada behind the microphones of TV Channel 7 and LRA Radio Nacional, which broadcast a 13 minute message on the national network. In his broadcast Perón seemed to strive to revalidate his leadership in front of his people, in a society beset by clashes between extremist groups from the left and the right.

Incredibly, even in his final hours in the presidential residence of Olivos, President Perón did not lose his good humour. On the morning of 1st July, his appearance was worrying. When he saw Dr Pedro Cossio's face, he joked: 'I don't like your face at all, doctor; you must take care of that sciatica that prevents you from walking straight...'

At 10:15 a.m., Father Héctor Ponzio, a Catholic priest, gave him the last rites and five minutes later Perón complained of not being able to breathe. He was having a heart attack. His cardiologist, Dr Augusto Ceara, inserted a catheter. 'Let me die, son,' he begged. However, the resuscitation, by both Dr Ceara and Dr Jorge Taiana, continued for almost three hours. At one point when the President regained consciousness, he said: 'This is over' and minutes later he died, and at 1:15 p.m., he was officially declared dead. He was 78 years old. The cause of death was a cardiac arrest as a result of the worsening of the chronic ischaemic heart disease that he suffered.

The announcement to the country was made by his widow, Vice President María Estela Martínez de Perón, who shortly after assumed the presidency. Perón's body was embalmed and after the official funeral, which was attended by hundreds of thousands of his followers, the coffin was placed in the family crypt at *La Chacarita* Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

Perón's widow held the position of President of the nation for 20 months. Her poor administration and the inability to control political violence accentuated the chaos in the country and her government finally collapsed on 24 March 1976 when the armed forces overthrew her and established a government of a Military Junta led by Lieutenant-General Jorge Rafael Videla, which, of course, is another story.

A few months before the coup d'état that overthrew President Isabel Perón on 24 March 1976, she had met with the future protagonists of the planned military coup, Lieutenant-General Jorge Rafael Videla and Admiral Emilio Massera. (Public domain)

Hundreds and thousands of people took to the streets for President Perón's funeral (top left). A member of the Argentine Federal Police greets the passing of Perón's coffin (top right). (Below) A soldier from the Argentine Army cries inconsolably when he sees Perón's coffin pass by, escorted by the Grenadier Regiment. (Public domain)

EPILOGUE

Undoubtedly, Juan Domingo Perón was, for better or for worse, a very important personality in Argentinean politics and the Argentine Army from the mid–1940s onwards. He has divided Argentine society in two since then – as someone has said , 'two shores without a bridge.' He has been loved and even revered by many, but equally hated by many others.

A few years after his death, actually in 1977 during the government of a Military Junta, which had overthrown Perón's wife the previous year, a curious situation arose aboard an Aerolíneas Argentinas jet bound to London, with a stopover in Madrid. Two pilots who had participated on opposing sides in the events of June 1955 met face to face for the first time. The co-pilot of the flight was Ernesto Adradás, who shot down the AT-6 of the Naval Aviation piloted by Midshipman Roman, (who bailed out). The other accompanying AT-6 was piloted by Corvette Lieutenant Máximo Rivero Kelly, who was able to escape. A passenger on board the mentioned Aerolíneas flight, Vice Admiral Rivero Kelly, was invited to the flight deck by the Commander, Captain Rodríguez, which was a courtesy at that time to another airman. As Rivero Kelly entered the flight deck, he was introduced to the other members to the crew. When the captain mentioned the name of his co-pilot, Rivero Kelly asked him: 'Didn't you fly in the Air Force?' Adradás nodded. Rivero Kelly, then said: 'Ah. Look, I was on the plane that was next to the one you shot down over Puerto Nuevo in 1955.' As he was leaving the flight

Former Air Force Lieutenant Ernesto Adradás, loyal to Perón, requested retirement in 1956 and later worked for a long time as a pilot for *Aerolineas Argentinas*. He was part of the crew of the Boeing 707 that finally brought Perón to Argentina in 1973 (Public Domain)

deck Rivero Kelly added: 'I found out that that's why the Peronists gave you a house and a car.' Adradás did not reply. The anger that, 22 years after the events, the Naval Aviator felt towards his old adversary was remarkable. Adradás's silence was not gratuitous, Vice Admiral Rivero Kelly was then a confidant of Admiral Emilio Massera, a member of the ruling Military Junta, and he was leading the repression in the north of the Province of Chubut.

On 1 July 1987, 13 years after his death, the Justicialist Party received a letter, signed by 'Hermes and the 13,' who claimed to have in their possession the military cap, the sword, a poem and the hands of Perón which had been stolen after a desecration of his grave. The group asked for 8 million dollars to return them. This fact created an immense commotion and although a case was opened in the Argentine courts, the investigation did not find the perpetrators of the act and they were never heard from again.

And to finish, the author of this volume has an anecdote related to former President Perón. In 2005, the *Instituto Nacional Newberiano* (Newberian National Institute) organised the 9th Iberoamerican Congress of Aeronautical History, inviting historians from various countries, including Paraguay. The topic proposed by the Paraguayan delegation was on the flight to exile of ex-President Perón, precisely on the 50th anniversary of that event. The organisers did not see this topic favourably and suggested that it should be changed, so as not to 'hurt susceptibilities' among the many anti-Peronists in the audience. The Paraguayan delegation protested arguing that the presentation was of a historical and not a political event, and in the end, the topic was accepted. After the presentation, an important member of the aforementioned Institute approached the speaker and commented in a low voice, 'Look, the subject was very interesting, but you have to know that Perón destroyed Argentina!'

After the overthrow of María Estela Martínez de Perón in 1976, military Juntas headed by Generals Jorge Rafael Videla (1976–1981), Roberto Viola (1981), Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri (1981–1982) and Reynaldo Bignone (1982–1983) led the Argentine government. With the return of democracy in 1983, Peronism, through the Justicialist Party, has had eight presidents in 40 years, Carlos Saúl Menem (1989–1995 and 1995–1999), Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (2001), Eduardo Duhalde (2002–2003), Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–2011 and 2011–2015) and Alberto Fernández (2019–2023). Meanwhile, the UCR has only acceded to the presidency on two occasions in the same period of time – Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989) and Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2001), while Mauricio Macri (2015–2019) did so through the *Propuesta Republicana Cambiemos* (Republican Proposal Let's Change).

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